

**INTERSECTIONALITY, RADICALISM,
IDENTITY, AND COMMUNITY:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY OF
ANIMAL ACTIVIST ORGANIZING IN CANADA**

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Abstract

This thesis is an ethnographic case study of an animal activist organization (ACT) through an intersectional feminist theoretical lens. Qualitative data regarding ACT's demographic constitution, internal organizational dynamics, activist strategies, ethical and political principles, and relations to other animal activists in the region have been collected through participant observations, in-depth interviews with activists, and a content analysis of social media. Data gathered and analyzed through the Grounded Theory methodology demonstrate that, despite its progressive politics in terms of gender, racialization, and class, ACT reproduced some oppressive dynamics of these, such as a normative, gendered division of labour. Contrary to ACT's principle of non-hierarchy, a co-founder became its leader due to his possession of traits valued in activist circles dominated by a white, middle-class, and masculine culture; and his politics informed by a particular radical activist subculture was adopted by ACT. Many were not allowed to join ACT for not embodying the expected activist criteria, which were exclusionary in the sense of being formulated through a white, middle-class culture. Ideological and tactical disagreements between ACT and other activists led to aggressive conflicts because of some ACT organizers' intolerance to any aberration from the rigid understanding of ethics they upheld. As individual and organizational identities outweighed solidarity in this activist setting, the erosion of trust further severed the community. Many activists who endorse ACT's principles of intersectionality, anti-oppression, and community-building attribute their disbandment to the failure of applying these in activist praxis, and envision a better future for animal advocacy through a flatter organizing, healthier communication, a less rigid understanding of ethics, and more respect and consideration afforded to the people in and out of the activist community.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Hrant Dink, the late socialist Armenian journalist, stands out amongst many who inspired me both in my activist and scholarly pursuits, because I owe him my first political epiphany. I was a high school teenager when Hrant Dink was assassinated in Istanbul, on January 19th, 2007. Back then, I was severely underinformed about and hardly interested in politics, spending most of my time playing video games and none of it reading the newspaper. My political views merely consisted of reciting what I was taught through the formal educational system and the mainstream media that targeted my social location, which I later started referring to as *the factory settings*. Hundreds of thousands marched at Hrant Dink's funeral, and my initial inquiry about who he was did not yield a satisfactory answer as my dad dismissed the question.

My first demonstration was at a hearing for Hrant Dink's assassin. After learning about how this journalist was insidiously demonized in the media for insulting Turks when an article of his – which criticizes the Armenian diaspora for their hatred towards Turks – was purposefully misinterpreted, I decided to skip school one day to demand justice. Because Hrant Dink advocated for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide of 1915, which I denied until then with no real knowledge, as expected from every citizen of Turkey, the first political and historical books I read ended up being on this subject. I moved on to reading about Kurds too, as some journalists I began to follow also wrote about this population and the history and present of their armed resistance in Turkey. Thanks to the works of the social justice oriented, activist journalists and social scientists, I quickly noticed that I was (systematically) under- and misinformed on most political subjects by the powerful,

including the state, the government, and the corporate media. The first real outcome of this epiphany became renouncing nationalism, Turkish or otherwise.

As a more critical and more politically engaged young person, I started a sociology degree in a university known for its Left student movement tradition. Throughout my undergraduate years, I confronted myself on my knowledge and views on societal issues one by one, such as capitalism, patriarchy, and homophobia. I kept learning, renouncing my old oppressive approaches, and getting more and more engaged in social justice activism for various groups from workers on strike to persecuted transgender sex workers, from Alevi citizens of Turkey to the trees that were being cut down for energy production or road expansion. Although my experience doing activism with different oppressed groups and for various social justice causes led to an experiential knowledge on the parallels and connections between oppressive power dynamics within my society, my first real encounter with the sociological concept of *intersectionality* occurred while translating *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist Vegetarian Critical Theory*, the 1990 masterpiece by Carol Adams on the embeddedness of women's and nonhumans' exploitation within a complex web of social inequalities and oppressions which reinforce and reproduce one another. By the time I received my undergraduate degree in sociology, I was a vegan social justice activist who claimed to advocate for all oppressed groups and fight against all oppression through an intersectional paradigm, although feminism and antispeciesism were the most central in my own activist work. While my veganism and animal activism were not receiving as much respect or recognition as my other political engagements in the academic and social justice circles I belonged to, I decided to merge my activism and my academic career to produce scientific work

in service of nonhumans, arguably the most oppressed and exploited social group which is afforded the least sympathy.

Research process

I arrived in Canada for my MA in Critical Sociology with such ideas. Soon, I was told about a human entertainment facility which exploits captive animals (The Business)¹, and a radical grassroots animal activist organization with intersectional politics protesting it (ACT). In line with the critical literature I had read on animal advocacy concerning the demographic constitution of the movement in the Global North, some internal dynamics of animal activism that reflect and reinforce oppressive gender relations (Gaarder, 2011; Groves, 1997), and some controversial activist strategies that have been critiqued as being insensitive towards other social justice issues (Kim, 2011), I was interested in studying ACT and exploring how they navigated these issues, considering their progressive politics on social justice issues including but not limited to speciesism. I wanted the end product of my research to be a resource that assists animal activist movements in becoming more socially inclusive and politically just, thus better advocate for all animals, human and nonhuman. Therefore, I approached ACT with this research question: “How do ACT’s demographic constitution, internal organizational dynamics, and activist strategies influence its capacity to function as a socially just animal activist organization for human and nonhuman subjects?”

At one of the first anti-Business demonstrations I attended, I approached Bob, the most visible organizer and representative of ACT, and shared my intention to study their activist group. My hope was to join ACT, do activism within this organization, while conducting an organizational ethnography on it. After the group

¹ All names of individuals, organizations, and institutions in the studied activist context have been replaced with pseudonyms in this thesis.

consent I received through Bob, I started contributing my labour into ACT's activist work, and noting down my observations at ACT's protests, as well as other relevant activist spaces including public discussions on social media. Although interviewing ACT organizers was an essential part of my project, ACT announced its disbandment before I could conduct any of those interviews; and when I contacted Bob asking about ACT's participation in this research, I did not hear back. One reminder and another effort to recruit ACT organizers as participants did not bear fruit, since I did not receive any response. Although I was not afforded an explanation for why ACT organizers were not corresponding with me despite their earlier group consent, I assumed that they might be experiencing activist burnout or simply feeling uneasy because of a lawsuit Bob was facing as a result of his activism. Therefore, I ceased my recruitment efforts to not stress this population any further, and revised my study to accommodate the unexpected developments of ACT disbanding and its organizers no longer showing interest in being interviewed.

Since ACT disbanded without accomplishing its activist goals, (i.e. ending animal exploitation at The Business) I approached it as a failed activist experiment, a case study whose investigation can still inspire animal activists' future success. Because the most prominent defining characteristic of ACT appeared to be its overt, radical, intersectional, anti-oppression politics, which seemed to distinguish this organization from other elements of the regional animal activist community, I adjusted the research project to focus on the role ACT's politics played throughout its participation in the anti-Business activist campaign. After a necessary revision, the research questions this study seeks to answer were finalized: "How did ACT's radical politics manifest in the anti-Business activist context, and what messages does this case study carry for improving animal activist organizing from an intersectional

lens?” Social dynamics of gender, racialization, and class continued to be major areas of exploration through the process of answering these questions. I employed an intersectional feminist theoretical framework and a Grounded Theory methodology to collect and analyze a range of ethnographic, qualitative data.

The data this thesis is based on have been collected through three methods: participant observations, in-depth interviews, and a light content analysis of ACT’s online presence on social media. Participant observations occurred at various activist spaces in the region, but mainly at anti-Business demonstrations. Occasionally, various animal or other social justice events I attended in the region involved relevant observations concerning ACT organizers’ performances at those sites or simply their absence. At ACT’s demonstrations, I observed the physical setting, the social environment, formal and informal behaviours, planned and unplanned activities, and verbal and non-verbal interactions. Throughout my observations, I witnessed firsthand the size and demographic constitution of ACT membership, the turnout at their events, their activist practices, the social and physical context of their activism, and social interactions amongst organizers and between organizers and other protesters, including the division of labour and distribution of roles in this activist group. While collecting rich data on ACT in public activist spaces, unfortunately, I had limited access to ACT’s organizational sphere, consisting only of one short in-person meeting. Reflecting back on a conversation I had with Bob on this research, I assume that my inability to observe much decision-making and strategizing was a result of ACT rarely holding in-person meetings in that time period but mainly organizing online. Other possible reasons are discussed in Chapter Three.

The second method of data collection was in-depth, semi-structured interviews with animal activists who were once affiliated with ACT to different degrees, from

organizers to regular attendees of ACT demonstrations. Nine interviews with animal activists who have been involved in the anti-Business campaign constitute a significant part of the ethnographic data of this research. Although none of the most recent ACT organizers were interviewed, a few participants had temporarily been ACT organizers. Activists talked about their experiences in the anti-Business campaign, including ACT's role in those. Their accounts about the history of anti-Business activism, the emergence of ACT, and how ACT affected the anti-Business campaign and the regional social justice activist movement constitute the most foundational data of this thesis. In their interviews, animal activists described ACT's demographic constitution, internal organizational dynamics, divisions of labour, and activist and recruiting strategies. Interviews also assisted me towards a deeper grasp of ACT's organizational politics, which is explained in the thesis through discussions of participants' personal experiences of involvement in anti-Business activism.

Interviewing activists with different degrees of involvement with ACT proved useful, because activists' different locations in relation to ACT reflected on their experiences and observations, which created richness and variety in data. For instance, activists who regularly attended ACT demonstrations but were not key organizers had little input into organizational decision-making processes, and consequently, their experiences of demonstrations differed from the organizers'. Participants who had left ACT after temporarily doing activism with this group shared how they experienced ACT's activist approach. For instance, some activists voiced their frustration with feeling silenced in ACT, and some criticized ACT's inconsistencies in incorporating their political and ethical principles into their activist praxis, suggesting that this supposedly anti-oppressive activist organization was in fact itself oppressive at times. Missing the accounts of the most recent ACT

organizers, who might have voiced rationales and justifications for some of their controversial decisions which were perceived as being counterproductive for activism and harmful to the activists, is a limitation of this study. Due to ACT organizers' disinterest in being interviewed, the critiques towards ACT remained unchallenged.

The third and last portion of the ethnographic data was collected through the exploration of ACT's social media activity. These data were gathered mainly on Facebook, where ACT announced and promoted its demonstrations, and interacted with attendees. I simply observed public interactions of ACT organizers, how they handled the online activist sphere, how they talked to the attendees of their activist events on behalf of ACT. Sometimes, attendees of ACT's demonstrations sought guidance from and asked questions to organizers, or thanked them. These interactions provided me with insights on how ACT was perceived by the public, especially in terms of its representation and its leadership structure.

This research was conducted through a feminist intersectional theoretical framework with the understanding that various axes of power (including but not limited to gender, race, and class) are coarticulating; and when they manifest in social dynamics, an intersectional analysis is necessary to capture their intricacies and to produce theory based on a comprehensive investigation of the subjects' (i.e. animal activists) lived experiences. I have utilized a Grounded Theory approach, which allowed the thesis to develop through the constant collection and analysis of data. Because process and contextuality were significant elements of this research project, Grounded Theory proved to be a reasonable choice, guiding me towards valid and reliable data. These theoretical and methodological choices are explained more in detail in Chapter Two and Three respectively.

Contributions to the academic literature on animal advocacy

In analyzing the qualitative, ethnographic data in relation to my research questions, I explored how ACT applied their radical, intersectional, anti-oppressive politics into their activist praxis, to what extent they were successful in being a socially inclusive and politically just animal activist organization, how they achieved these successes, what shortcomings they had and why, and how their activism could have been more liberating for human and nonhuman subjects. Answering these questions in relation to the demographic constitution of this animal activist group, its internal dynamics, and activist strategies provides invaluable insights for future activism.

Many scholars have studied animal activism in the Global North. They find that the animal activist movement in the Global North is almost completely composed of white activists (Plous, 1991; Galvin & Herzog, 1992; Harper, 2011; Nocella, 2012), the majority of whom are women (Plous, 1991; Jamison & Lunch, 1992; Shapiro, 1994; Galvin & Herzog, 1992; 1998; Luke, 2007; Gaarder, 2011). The occasional study argues against a positive correlation between affluence and consideration for nonhumans (Peek, Bell & Dunham, 1996; Jerolmack, 2003; Signal & Taylor, 2006), but most scholars concur that animal activists are primarily middle-class with high educational levels and incomes (Guither, 1998; Lowe & Ginsberg, 2002; Gaarder, 2011; Glasser, 2011a). Despite their lower numbers in the rank-and-file membership, men tend to occupy positions of power in activist groups as leaders or spokespeople; and although women do much of the behind-the-scenes grunt work, men are more visible at demonstrations, and take credit for women's work (Groves, 1997; Gaarder 2011; Glasser, 2011a; Wrenn, 2015). Animal activist strategies that masculinize the purportedly feminine movement – by encouraging men's visible

participation (Jones, 2004; Kheel, 2006) – to render the movement more credible (Einwohner, 2002a) – have been critiqued, as well as some tactics that sexualize and objectify women's bodies (Deckha, 2008; Glasser, 2011b) and some campaigns that are found unethical for invoking controversial racial analogies with no commitment to anti-racism (Kim, 2011; 2015; see also Harper, 2010a; 2011b). Animal activist literature in the US has been criticized for frequent use of an advanced, inaccessible language (Humane Research Council, 2011), and for appealing to racially and financially privileged people more than impoverished and non-white communities (Hammer 2009b; Harper 2011b). The frequent neglect of labour issues within the animal activist movement in North America (Nocella, 2012) also brings about critiques of elitism.

The literature on animal activism lays out a fertile foundation on which this research project bears fruit. Yet, there are certain gaps in this literature that this thesis attempts to address. First, the literature on the demographics of the movement remains descriptive, and rarely examines the effects of activists' social positionality on animal activism. Academics who attend to the internal dynamics of animal activist organizations often merely demonstrate how these reflect the demographics of the group through an analytic approach which focuses on gender while overlooking other axes of power such as racialization and class, or includes these only in a secondary way (Deckha, 2012). While studies that explore animal activist strategies tend to focus on their gendered, racialized, or classed nature independently, rather than intersectionally, the work of Patricia Jones, Breeze Harper, Anthony Nocella, Claire Jean Kim, Maneesha Deckha, Greta Gaard, and Carol Glasser are some notable exceptions that provide productive intersectional theoretical insights. But, to my knowledge, no scholarly work on the animal activist movement involves the

ethnographic study of a radical, grassroots animal activist organization, tackles the three phenomena of demographic constitution, internal dynamics, and activist strategies together, investigates their effect on animal activism in terms of social inclusion and political justice, while employing an intersectional feminist theoretical framework that highlights the complex relations among gender, race, and class that structure these processes. Therefore, this thesis promises to address significant empirical, methodological, and theoretical gaps in the Critical Animal Studies literature, as well as provide guidance for the future of animal activism.

Overview of research findings

After analyzing the participant observation, interview, and textual data, I have found that, despite its overt anti-oppression politics, ACT has harmed the anti-Business campaign and the regional animal activist community through some of its organizers' aggressive and antagonizing behaviour. Although ACT's commitment to grassroots activism, its progressive, intersectional politics, and its principles of inclusivity, community-building, anti-oppression, and non-hierarchy were for the most part appreciated and supported by the participants, the data also suggest that ACT often could not translate these principles into practice. The most salient example was the fact that many activists found ACT to be quite hierarchical, led and represented almost exclusively by Bob. Through the group's division of labour and allocation of roles, normative and oppressive gendered dynamics were also reproduced in ACT. Moreover, most participants characterize ACT's treatment of other activists as having been intimidating and alienating, rather than inclusive or welcoming. Some suggest that, after their initial success in galvanizing community solidarity in the region, ACT failed to navigate the activist influx to the anti-Business

campaign, defined its activist criteria too strictly, and isolated itself from the rest of the regional movement.

Some ACT organizers often had aggressive conflicts with other activist individuals in the region due to disagreements in ideology or tactical preference. Participants suggested that, ACT organizers easily labeled other activists as oppressive or abusive, pushed them away from the anti-Business campaign, while pressuring the rest of the regional social justice community to shun them. Yet, according to participants, the animal activist community could not make informed decisions on these conflicts because it was not being afforded necessary information by ACT organizers. ACT's silence on important subjects involved a lack of organizational transparency as well. Data suggest that, while Bob became a highly prominent activist figure in the region, thanks to his cultural and subcultural capital, ACT ended up being defined by his radical activist identity, which involved a rigid understanding of ethics. One could deviate from the resulting strict radical activist subcultural rules of ACT by supporting animal welfare, not being vegan, or smoking. While participants argued that ACT did not recognize many people as legitimate activists for such reasons and, therefore, refused to organize with them, they also noted that whoever continued to associate with someone written off by ACT received a similarly aggressive treatment from some ACT organizers. Participants claimed that ACT organizers tried to control other activists' behaviour and did not trust anyone who made different decisions than them. Because ACT kept isolating itself from other activists and did not share information with them, the organization came to be viewed as a "clique," a small group of like-minded people, or even a "cult," gathered around a strong leader. According to many activists, Bob and some other ACT organizers created and intensified many conflicts in the regional animal activist community and

divided activists instead of bringing them together to create a more diverse and stronger movement.

Almost all activists who took part in this study appreciated ACT's politics and principles. Whereas participants argued that the shortcomings in ACT's activism were personal, in other words, caused by certain individuals' competition with others for the subcultural status radical activism brings about. Data suggest that toxic masculinities² and ACT's imposed hegemony of a particular radical activist subcultural ethics – which reflects a white, middle-class culture – have been the major problems in the anti-Business campaign. Women animal activists were overshadowed by dominant activist men, and individualism increased to the detriment of solidarity in the anti-Business campaign, which rendered the activist community less welcoming and more alienating. ACT organizers' criteria for potential activist recruits also included significant theoretical and political knowledge, which is a privilege in a society where impoverished or otherwise marginalized people struggle to access formal education. After their critiques of ACT's activism, participants argued that a truly inclusive and anti-oppressive animal activism is possible through improved activist communication. They suggested that animal and other forms of social justice activism would benefit from more flattened leadership structures, self-reflexivity, accountability, transparency, openness to critique and feedback, and less preoccupation with ethical purity.

Overview of chapters

Chapter Two combines the literature review for this study and the theoretical framework that guides it. It opens with the discussion of demographics, internal

² Coined by Shepherd Bliss (1995) of the mythopoetic men's movement, developed by some prominent masculinities scholars such as Michael S. Kimmel (1995), and widely referenced in feminist activist circles, toxic masculinities refer to particular constructions of masculinity shaped by one's social environment and possession of related privileges.

dynamics, and strategies of animal advocates in the Global North, with particular emphases on gender, racialization, and class. After illuminating the coarticulating nature of these through a review of the literature, I introduce feminist intersectionality, outlining the features of this paradigm that suit this research project. The chapter continues with a survey of the contributions intersectionality made to knowledge production in the field of Critical Animal Studies, and concludes with a discussion of how this thesis makes a novel contribution to this literature. Research design is described in Chapter Three. Grounded Theory is discussed in this chapter, as it has influenced both the collection and analysis of data. The ethical framework of this study and a self-reflexive narrative of the research process including its limitations are also provided in this chapter.

The first analytical chapter, Chapter Four, is called “*The Activist(s)*.” It begins by outlining the anti-Business activist context and locating ACT in it. It continues with the profile of research participants, who have themselves been highly involved in this activist context. In line with the literature, six of the nine animal activists interviewed identified as women, and all are white settlers. Similarly, in an animal activist setting populated mostly by women, ACT itself looked like an organization composed mostly of women but led by a man, although this image contradicted its principle of non-hierarchy. After examining ACT more closely including its radical activist philosophy, this chapter focuses on how this organization and its de facto leader, Bob, developed a highly influential and dominant activist status in the region, while many activists who did not share ACT’s ideology and activist approach were made to feel inadequate and inferior in their activism.

Chapter Five, “Communication (or the lack thereof),” further analyzes the effects of ACT’s activist approach by focusing on the problematic patterns of

communication within the regional animal activist community. Frequent aggressive conflicts between ACT and other animal activists are discussed in this chapter, as well as how disagreements were handled in this community. Through the examination of Bob's, other ACT organizers' and some other anti-Business animal activists' public performances, this chapter proposes that toxic masculinity, whiteness, and middle-class privilege have dominated the anti-Business activist culture and hurt regional animal activist community. Individualistic masculine leadership, and ACT's enactment of an exclusionary radical subcultural identity which reinforced the dominance of white and middle-class values stood out to be the two major problems within the anti-Business campaign.

The sixth and final chapter starts with a summary of research findings through a brief, chronological discussion of ACT's activism. It continues with my critical self-reflection as an activist researcher, which includes how I personally relate to this research project through the similarities between my activist experiences and the studied context. After going over some major but common mistakes in the animal activist movement, I offer the participants' suggestions for preventing those in the future. This chapter acknowledges the limitations of the study, and outlines its contributions to animal activism and to Critical Animal Studies literature. The thesis concludes with suggestions for further research and a hopeful, optimistic note on the future of animal activism.

Chapter Two: Intersectionality, Animals, and Activism

This chapter aims to situate the research questions guiding this study in Critical Animal Studies literature, and explain why I use feminist intersectional theory to answer them. To achieve these goals, I first review the literature that analyzes the demographics, internal organizational dynamics, and strategies of animal activist groups in the Global North as organized by social relations of gender, race, class, and species. After outlining what is already known on this topic and identifying some gaps in the literature I attempt to shrink with this research project, I provide a definition of feminist intersectional theory, a brief history of its development, and explain why it is an appropriate paradigm for this research. The chapter concludes with an overview of some sociological Critical Animal Studies literature premised on intersections of gender, race, class, and species, which illuminates the significant role of an intersectional approach and delineates some critiques regarding its insufficient use.

Animal activism in the Global North

In this section, I investigate the demographic constitution of animal activist movements in the Global North, their internal organizational dynamics (e.g. leadership structures, divisions of labour), and activist strategies, including movement self-representations, activist campaign tactics, and the choice of protest targets. The review of literature on these topics is intended to demonstrate to what extent normative and oppressive dynamics of gender, race, and class are reproduced or undermined by animal activists of the Global North. Before beginning to discuss the animal activist movement, it is necessary to acknowledge that it is far from being a monolithic entity. Animal activists are quite diverse in many aspects. Some get paid for their activism while others engage in unpaid, grassroots efforts. Some undertake the responsibility of rescuing and caring for individual nonhuman animals, whereas

others work on public education campaigns to reduce nonhuman suffering, through the promotion of veganism for instance. Activists adopt different ideological and political approaches as well, both to interspecies and human intraspecies power dynamics. Therefore, some activists advocate for animal welfare (i.e. improving the treatment of nonhumans confined and exploited for human desires) and others challenge the very legitimacy of humans' use of other animals. Similarly, animal activists are aware of, engaged in, and vocal about human social justice issues to different degrees. Animal activist individuals and organizations can have conservative as well as progressive political views. All these result in animal activism taking a wide variety of forms which sometimes hardly resemble one another. Because animal activists are so heterogenous, making blanket statements about this group (or vegans for that matter) would be fallacious (see Greenebaum, 2012b). This should be taken into account while reading this thesis and any other text making statements about animal activists or vegans.

Because of this heterogeneity of animal activists, and the limited scholarship on this group, a narrow definition of animal activist would have significantly restricted the sociological literature to draw on for this research. Therefore, in this thesis, I consider anyone who acts to further nonhumans' interests an animal activist. Although my approach is one for the liberation of all animals and the eradication of speciesism, welfarists and scholarship on them have not been excluded. Occasionally, the term animal advocate is used more loosely to include people who care about nonhumans (demonstrated by their veganism for instance), but do not proactively work to reduce or end animal exploitation.

Another necessary reminder concerns not only animal activist but all social justice movements. Although, for the purpose of this research, animal activists are

subjected to a wide variety of profound critiques, identified problems are by no means particular to animal activism. Sexism, racism, and classism, as well as other forms of oppression, penetrate into every social movement and get reproduced in various forms. In fact, hardly any other social justice movement challenges speciesism or is denounced for not doing so. Critically examining other activist movements, however, is beyond the scope and purpose of this project. Nevertheless, it is still important to note that, a speciesist ideology is embedded in humans regardless of their identities, social locations, and political views (Sanbonmatsu, 2014). Every human benefits from their species privilege, thus is not at all eager to give it up. Therefore, although it is my responsibility as an animal activist to be critical about my movement to improve it towards a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of social justice and anti-oppression, I would also like to acknowledge that shortcomings in these regards are far from being the only – or even the most major – reasons why the vast majority of people do not care about the oppression, exploitation, and suffering of nonhumans. Just as many men and women are hostile to feminism, not because of feminists' flaws per se, but because they either have vested interests in the continuation of the dominant gender order or are simply indoctrinated by it, the main reason behind the negative reactions animal activists receive is people's reluctance to confront their species privilege. Of course, this is only more reason for animal activists to be rigorously self-reflexive and committed to make our movements and messages more welcoming, both in theory and activist praxis.

Demographic constitution of animal activists.

Relations of gender, race, and class play out in all aspects of social life including animal activist organizing. Understanding the demographic composition of this movement is important for two reasons. First, this knowledge helps identify the

subjects while analyzing social dynamics amongst animal activists or their preferred strategies. Secondly, animal activists' identities and social locations profoundly influence how they are perceived by others, which also impacts how activists strive to present themselves (Einwohner, 2002). Therefore, this section critically reviews the available knowledge on animal activists' demographics in the Global North.

The common belief in the literature is that animal activism in the Global North is gendered, racialized, and classed (Glasser, 2011a), the average animal activist being considered a white, middle-class woman with higher-than-average formal education (Guither, 1998). Scholars find that women constitute the majority of animal activists in North America (Galvin & Herzog, 1992; 1998; Jamison & Lunch, 1992; Plous, 1991; Shapiro, 1994) and that the movement is almost entirely white (Galvin & Herzog, 1992; Plous, 1991). Despite the lack of more recent demographic research, continued assertion of these gendered (Gaarder, 2011; Luke, 2007) and racialized (Harper, 2011b; Nocella, 2012) demographics is not challenged. Although she does not attend to activist identity, Harper's (2009) internet survey of vegans in the US shows that women and white people dominate this group in numbers as well. Faunalytics (2017), a non-profit research organization, finds that women and people with higher formal education are more likely to take actions that further nonhumans' interests.

The disproportionate presence of women in the animal activist movement, combined with an association between caring for nonhuman animals and traditional femininity, results in animal activism being perceived as a feminine enterprise and activists being discursively framed in misogynistic ways as "hysterical," "irrational," "overly emotional," and "sentimental" (Einwohner, 2002a; Gaarder, 2011; Groves, 1997). Some more aggressive sexist slurs include "crazed spinsters" and "sob sisters"

(Munro, 2001). Corwin Kruse (1999) suggests that this characterization discourages men from joining a movement socially constructed as feminine. Hence, the gender imbalance in animal activism gets reproduced and turns into a vicious cycle.

The animal activist movement in North America is even more homogenous in terms of race than gender, white people constituting the overwhelming majority (Harper, 2011b; Harris, 2010; Nocella, 2012). According to Angela Harris (2010, p. 74), animal activism is viewed as “a white thing” by many African Americans. Harper (2011b) notes that veganism has also become strongly associated with whiteness. She documents that only 3% of vegans in North America are people of colour, and the percentage of racialized attendees of animal activist events are sometimes even lower (Harper, 2011b, p. 222). A Latina participant in Emily Gaarder's (2011, p. 71) research is one of many people of colour who report being accused by their own communities of “being whitened” by their veganism or association with animal activism (see also Noemi, 2008). This is especially concerning, since “[e]thical vegetarianism has an ancient philosophical history in both the Western and Eastern context” (Bailey, 2007, p. 49). Considering “Chinese, Indian, and African traditional cuisines,” Josephine Donovan (as quoted in Bailey, 2007, p. 52) writes: “If anything, it is meat-eating that is a Western norm that ‘development’ has imposed upon non-Western nations.”

Yet, contemporary racial imbalance in animal advocacy extends from unpaid activism to employment in non-governmental organizations for animal welfare. Sue-Ellen Brown (2005a) investigates African American employment in animal welfare organizations in the US. Of the 13 organizations that participated in her study, 62% had no African American employees. The highest reported African American employee percentage was 7%, the average 4%, with less than 1% at managerial levels

(Brown, 2005a). Due to a low survey response rate, Brown (2005a) suspects that the actual national average might be even lower.

Especially because of the predominantly white demographics of animal advocacy in the Global North, racialized vegans and animal activists emphasize the importance of their presence and work, since they know the needs of and thus are more equipped to appeal to their communities of colour (Brown, 2005b; Gaarder, 2011). Although rarely afforded the recognition they deserve, some people of colour are actively engaged in animal advocacy including intersectional activist work, running Black vegetarian and vegan societies in the US, online forums such as *Vegans of Color* and *Black Vegans Rock*, and writing vegan soul food cookbooks (Harper, 2011b). Indigenous vegans and animal activists constitute another overlooked group that needs to be acknowledged. Many Indigenous people have been involved in nonhuman advocacy including direct actions for animal liberation (Coronado, 2000) as well as activist and academic work (Belcourt; 2015; Robinson; 2010), some of whom argue that veganism constitutes the decolonization of their diet and currently resonates with their cultural teachings more than being an omnivore does (Fisher, 2011; Robinson, 2013; Serrato, 2015; see also johanna, 2009a).

Unlike race and gender, there is no scholarly consensus on how classed animal activism is in the Global North, although a number of studies have argued that animal activists are socioeconomically privileged (Glasser, 2011a; Guither, 1998; Lowe & Ginsberg, 2002). Instead of a classic Marxist approach of identifying class through ownership of means of production or lack thereof, a more Bourdieuan understanding of various types of capital, including but not limited to economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986), is adopted in the literature to investigate the socioeconomic status of animal activists, with particular emphases on educational level and income.

Many scholars suggest that animal activists have higher levels of education and income compared to the general population (Gaarder, 2011; Galvin & Herzog, 1992; Glasser, 2011a; Guither, 1998; Jamison & Lunch, 1992; Lowe & Ginsberg, 2002; Shapiro, 1994). Others, however, claim that there is either no correlation between socioeconomic status and support for animal advocacy or that there is in fact a negative one. Julian McAllister Groves (1997, p. 39), for instance, argues that animal activists do not belong to a single socioeconomic group. According to Charles Peek, Nancy Bell, and Charlotte Dunham (1996), US Americans who support animal rights tend to be of lower socioeconomic status, including women with little education and men with below average incomes. In another US study, Colin Jerolmack (2003) finds that animal rights supporters are less educated than the average citizen, while income does not stand out as a noteworthy variable. Tania Signal and Nicola Taylor's (2006) analysis of Australian data suggests that educational level does not predict people's attitudes towards nonhumans, while income is negatively correlated with support of animal rights. However, they note that the latter finding might be a manifestation of gendered inequalities in earning, since women who have higher scores that indicate positive attitudes toward nonhumans have also reported lower incomes (Signal & Taylor, 2006).

Unlike the sceptics, Brian Lowe and Caryn Ginsberg (2002) echo the common belief that animal activists are an affluent group. They use James Jasper's term *post-citizenship movement* to identify the animal activist movement, which characterizes it as being “composed of people already integrated into their society’s political economic, and educational systems” (Jasper quoted in Lowe & Ginsberg, 2002, p. 203), who do not have to struggle for their own fundamental rights and are altruistically doing activism for others. Authors also argue that *middle-class*

radicalism, a term coined by Frank Parkin, applies to animal activists, because one requires leisure time and a flexible income in order to do activism for nonhumans (Lowe & Ginsberg, 2002). This view implies that animal activists belong to an elite with significant socioeconomic privilege, exempt from any experience of hardship or oppression. Yet, it can be argued that these supposed requirements of free time and financial security are not exclusive to animal activism but to all activism, including anti-racist and anti-poverty movements whose members are not likely to be affluent. In the absence of recent demographic research, the assumed socioeconomic privilege of animal activists in the Global North is somewhat puzzling.

Dated studies often cited to support claims of animal activists' socioeconomic privilege also have shortcomings, one of which is related to sampling. The participants in Lowe and Ginsberg's (2002) study were attendees of a paid conference, so it is no surprise that they reported incomes in an affluent or at least middle-class range. Moreover, three studies widely cited for their findings on the demographics of animal activism (Galvin & Herzog, 1992; Jamison & Lunch, 1992; Plous, 1991) analyze data gathered at the same national animal rights march. Therefore, first, it should be predicted that the attendees who could afford to come from out of town might have raised the socioeconomic level of the samples, and, second, it would not be safe to assume that these studies strengthen each other's findings through supposed replication, because their samples are drawn from the exact same population. Studies that contradict the stereotype of socioeconomically privileged animal advocate are not free from limitations either. None of them actually sample activists but investigate supposed animal rights supporters (Peek, Bell, & Dunham, 1996; Jerolmack, 2003) or assess attitudes towards nonhumans (Signal & Taylor, 2006) through surveys of broad

populations. Consequently, it would be safe to assume that we do not have current reliable data on how animal activists are classed in the Global North or elsewhere.

In addition to being presumed socioeconomically privileged, animal advocates are also stereotyped as not caring about human oppressions, despite studies that argue the opposite (Nibert, 1994; Shapiro 1994; Aaltola, 2011). “Obviously, since people are animals, total animal liberation will not be achieved until both human and nonhuman animals are free” (Jones, 2004, p. 150). For this reason, but also because the oppression of nonhuman animals and various human groups are deeply intertwined (which is explored further in this chapter), an animal activist movement that fails to challenge oppressive and normative dynamics of gender, race, and class (as well as other axes of power) would simply be inadequate in its advocacy for justice and liberation for animals.

Despite the “constantly repeated claim that caring about animals somehow degrades human beings or demonstrates a lack of concern towards human suffering” (Sorenson, 2011a, p. 231), some argue that “those who devote themselves to the welfare of one exploited group (whether human or animal) in many cases extend concern to other groups as well” (Finsen & Finsen as quoted in Irvine, 2004, p. 24). Participation of animal advocates in other social justice causes throughout history such as slavery abolition (Sorenson, 2010; Wrenn, 2014) and the suffragette movement (Adams, 1990; Gaarder, 2011; Jones 2004; 2011) supports this observation. Shapiro (1994) maintains that the majority of animal activists are or have been involved in other progressive social movements, because they care about humans and ecosystems as well as nonhumans. In agreement, Elisa Aaltola (2011) finds accusations of political regression unfair to grassroots animal activists who often show solidarity with other social justice movements and condemn oppressive

campaigns by mainstream animal advocacy organizations (see also Best, 2009; and Corman, 2012, p. 74, 216). Although an intersectional social justice perspective is not a majority opinion within the animal advocacy movement and is not sufficiently represented in public domains, it is present within the grassroots animal activist communities (Broad, 2013). Intersectional grassroots campaigns started by vegan animal activists include Food Empowerment Project, Toronto Vegetarian Food Bank, and Burrito Project and People's Potato in Montreal (L. Corman, personal communication, February 3, 2015).

One of the reasons behind misconceptions of animal activism is the assumption that big, NGOized, institutionalized, professional organizations such as PETA are representative of it. Data gathered on such organizations are frequently generalized to the whole movement despite their quite negative reputation among animal activists (Aaltola, 2011; Glasser, 2011b; vegina, 2012). Grassroots activists and groups who tend to have much more progressive and radical politics are unfortunately understudied. Moreover, Wrenn (2012, p. 34) maintains that animal activists are “sharply divided over the end goal of either liberation or reform and over the legitimacy of various tactics.” Animal activist groups dispute each other on every level, often publicly (Badano, Burgermeister, Henne, Murphy, & Cole, 2014). Some infighting is so serious that Ronnie Lee (2014, p. xiv) describes it as “vegans tearing one another's throats.” As noted above, painting the whole animal activist movement with the same brush is the consequence of not knowing how diverse it is.

It should also be noted that – animal or not – social justice movements may be single-issue, compete with each other, prioritize their cause over others, and sometimes even “actively oppress other disadvantaged groups to further their own aims” (Glasser, 2011b, p. 51-52). Thus, the tendency of singling out the animal

activist movement with such critiques, while other social justice movements rarely have to defend themselves because of their disregard of speciesism, must be questioned. Steven Best (2009) and John Sorenson (2011a) criticize the Left for not including nonhumans in their ideologies for peace, freedom, non-violence, justice, and equality, therefore ending up with limiting and inconsistent philosophies. In her dialogical introduction to a journal issue with Carla Freccero, Claire Jean Kim (Kim & Freccero, 2013, p. 465) comments:

Persistent anthropocentrism has kept some progressives from recognizing the articulation of species with other classification systems they take more seriously (the “holy trinity” of race/gender/class), but species meanings have played a momentous role in underwriting and energizing various categories of human difference over the millennia, and they are starting to become more visible as products of human labor.

This research was also an opportunity to find out about the politics of some animal activists and their approaches towards human social justice issues, and concluded that, more often than not, animal activists care about, are supportive of, and somewhat involved in human social justice struggles, which is further discussed in Chapter Four.

Internal dynamics of animal activist organizing.

As noted, demographics of animal activism reflect on its internal dynamics and these two cannot be accurately analyzed in isolation. Therefore, this section summarizes the academic and activist knowledge on how people’s different identities are navigated in animal activist organizing in the Global North. Patterns of formal and informal hierarchy amongst animal activists is discussed in relation to the particular traits valued (and undervalued) in the movement and their normative gendered, racialized, and classed connotations in Western culture. Manifestations of gender

inequality is explored in animal activists' divisions of labour and leadership structures. Some alienating interactions between activists of colour and their white counterparts are investigated in relation to racialized demographics, while explaining how, despite constituting the majority in the movement, many women are subjected to gendered and sexualized forms of violence in different forms and degrees.

Since the majority of animal activists in the Global North are women, the celebration of masculinity within the movement might sound surprising. Nevertheless, it should be considered that social justice movements (however progressive they promise to be) are still components of a society that values masculinity over femininity, and are hence permeated by this gender hierarchy. After interviews with animal activists in Sweden, Kerstin Jacobsson and Jonas Lindblom (2012) find that those who had a history of illegal or high-risk activism, upheld animal rights over animal welfare, talked philosophically about animals in general rather than about individual animals, and had a rational orientation towards animals instead of an emotional one were perceived as being closer to a sacred activist ideal and thus had a higher status within their activist group's informal hierarchy. In the US, many animal activists celebrate risk-taking behaviour as evidence of dedication (Gaarder, 2011, p. 99) while some even see arrest as an end in itself, which supposedly proves commitment to sacrifice for nonhumans (Luke, 2007, p. 218). Animal activist men's trivialization and even ridicule of emotionality as well as less radical approaches to and less confrontational forms of activism are not unusual (Jones, 2004; Kheel, 2006; Gaarder, 2011). Courage, self-sacrifice, risk-taking, ideological radicalism, intellectual abstraction, and reason (as opposed to emotion) stand out as admired characteristics in this context. Although none of these have any essential relation to masculinity, they have come to be understood so in Western thought and culture, as

opposed to a dichotomously imagined and degraded femininity (Jones, 2012; Kheel, 1993; 2006).

Although the dualistic Western modernist thought belittles emotionality as opposed to a glamourized rationality (Jones, 2012), Groves (1997, p. 148) observes a double-standard among the animal activists he studied in the US: “Men were praised for being both emotional and rational. But women were criticized if they were not rational all of the time.” He argues that, while animal activist men's expressions of anger are seen as dedication and strength, women activists' expression of any emotion is seen as a weakness (Groves, 1997). Groves (1997, p. 148-149) further demonstrates the gendered double-standard he observed in an animal activist organization by explaining how an activist man was admired by fellow women activists for being a “doer” rather than a “talker,” although he avoided organizational meetings where hard work was done and simply attended protests where he got into quarrels.

While men's mere presence and confrontational performance in public is understood as activist work, women activists, whose significant behind-the-scenes labour is undermined, notice men's omission of work and pursuit of publicity, and criticize them for longing to be “out in the spotlight” and “wanting to have their name be everywhere” (Gaarder, 2011, p. 95-96). Similarly, women activists observe that men assign themselves the role of “overseeing” the activist organization, which entails “telling other people what to do” because they “have ideas they want other people to carry out” (Gaarder, 2011, p. 96). As a result, men's activism ends up being more rewarding through being credited and receiving publicity for women's underrated labour-intensive activist work.

It could be argued that this high appreciation of men's little work assists their upward mobility, since men disproportionately occupy leadership and representative

roles in animal activist organizations in the Global North (Adams, 2011; Gaarder, 2011; Glasser, 2011a; Wrenn, 2015). Kenneth Shapiro (1994) finds that almost two thirds of animal activist movement leaders are men. According to Lyle Munro (2001), although more than half of animal protection organizations in Britain, United States, and Australia have women leaders, gender ratio in the administrative positions still does not reflect women's majority in rank-and-file membership. Pointing to this gender imbalance on different levels of animal activism, one woman activist describes her experience as "one man in charge of a lot of women" (Gaarder, 2011, p. 95). Although men's ambition for authority and leadership positions is common in all social movements, Corey Lee Wrenn (2015) argues that women animal activists participate in this pattern by promoting men to positions of power, prestige, and influence, even when they are not suitable or qualified. This behaviour is motivated by the widely-held belief that men's representation benefits the animal activist movement by providing credibility through masculine authority (Einwohner, 2002a; Einwohner, Hollander, & Olson, 2000; Wrenn, 2015).

Wrenn (2015) claims that gender imbalance in leadership to is more prevalent in professional animal activist organizations than grassroots ones. In agreement, Gaarder (2011, p. 94) describes a trend in which men take over the leadership of grassroots animal advocacy organizations that were initially founded by women, after the organization is institutionalized on a national level (i.e. acquires more funding and influence). Similarly, although animal welfare advocacy is perceived as less radical, and therefore even more feminine than animal rights activism (Jones, 2004; Kheel, 2006), in the US, men tend to lead animal welfare organizations more than animal rights groups, which allows them to control greater funding (Harold Herzog, Jr. cited in Gaarder, 2011, p. 114).

Being overshadowed by men is not the only way women are affected by sexism in animal advocacy groups. Although they constitute the majority, animal activist movement is not necessarily a safe(r) space for women, because sexual harassment is prevalent in activist circles (Adams, 2011; Blum, 2013, p. 256; Ernst, 2010c; Gaarder, 2011). Carol Adams (2011, p. 273) argues that, not expecting sexually abusive behaviour to occur in a supposedly altruistic and politically informed social justice movement, “women lower their defenses” in animal activist groups, which makes them more vulnerable to such violence. When women are sexually harassed or assaulted by fellow activist men, they tend to be reluctant to speak out, either because they are also indoctrinated by the dominant activist culture which teaches being thankful to men for their activist work for nonhumans while not particularly valuing women’s well-being (Adams, 2011), or because of concerns about being perceived as disloyal to the cause, mostly due to the same dominant activist culture (Gaarder, 2011; Jones, 2006). Within an ethical framework in which nonhumans’ plight triumphs all others’, as long as the activist work is being done and men’s activism is understood as more effective than women’s, sexual abusers are rarely held accountable (Adams, 2011; Gaarder, 2011). Even in the supposedly more radical grassroots level, fighting sexism is not easier, argues one woman activist participant in Gaarder’s (2011) study, because it is hard to call out men’s offensive behaviours when they self-identify as and are assumed to be anti-sexist and feminist. Many women have left the animal activist movement due to sexist as well as racist attitudes (Gaarder, 2011, p. 102).

Critiques of racism are no surprise considering that the animal activist movement in North America “remains dominated by people who identify as white both theoretically and in practice” (Nocella, 2012, p. 142), in other words, both in its

demographic composition and its dominant cultural, ideological, and tactical approaches to animal activism. In addition to a default speciesism, which is possessed by most people regardless of their identities and social locations (Sanbonmatsu, 2014), many argue that people of colour's underrepresentation in the animal activist movement in the Global North is also a result of the movement's politics, strategies, or internal dynamics being perceived as hostile by non-white people (Brown 2005b; Harper, 2011b; Harris, 2010). For instance, in Brown's (2005b) interviews with the few African Americans employed in animal welfare organizations in the US, unsupportive and unwelcoming environments, as well as racial insensitivity and even discrimination was reported (Brown, 2005b). According to participants, "some organizations had not provided the right supportive environment and then they had turned around and blamed the African Americans for not staying" (Brown, 2015b, p. 107). One participant argued that many African Americans they know applied for jobs in the animal welfare sector but never heard back (Brown, 2005b, p. 107-108), and another

felt insulted by those who compared the struggle for human rights to the struggle for animal rights. She stated that one individual had said that African Americans should fight for the emancipation of animals just as some Whites had fought for the emancipation of slaves (p. 105)

Such controversial analogies are discussed under animal activist strategies. Nocella (2012) adds that, the representation of animal rights and liberation by some activists as the last true progressive movement dismisses other social justice struggles and alienates oppressed people.

Racialized people also report feeling uneasy in vegan and animal activist spaces because of the unwanted attention they receive from white vegans and animal

activists who are surprised to see people of colour there, which Harper (2011b) calls *hypervisibility*. This phenomenon is seen as a manifestation of whiteness by racialized animal advocates, who report feeling like they are “constantly in the forefront of the gaze of white participants,” which dissuades them from participating in vegan and animal activist events (Harper, 2011b, p. 229). Harper (2011b) suggests a continuum between white activists’ overfascination with activists of colour and their labeling of culturally non-white food as “exotic,” another practice that frustrates people of colour by reminding them that they are being perceived as the other (see also johanna, 2010a).

High material expectations constitute another reason why some vegans and animal activists feel like they cannot conform. For instance, some vegans argue that one ought to replace their animal-derived clothes such as wool sweaters after going vegan, and shun whoever does not, which Stephanie Ernst (2009; 2010a) finds classist, because not everyone can afford a transition to that extent. Similarly, Nathan Gilmore (2010) shares his experience as a person with a disability which does not allow him to have expert knowledge on multiple animal-related topics or to cook. Unable to always be well-equipped to educate non-vegans on speciesism or to advertise veganism with his home-cooking, Gilmore (2010) feels like an incompetent activist. His critique of having the same level of expectations from everyone could easily extend from ability to class, because many impoverished people might have neither the time nor the money to do research or to cook. Such internal dynamics amongst animal activists might lead to feelings of not belonging to the activist community and personal inadequacy in reaching an activist ideal. These feelings may occur as a result of particular activist strategies too, which are explored in the next section.

Animal activist strategies in the Global North.

A significant part of analyzing a social movement is examining its activist strategies, because these are how activists apply their ideologies in practice towards their goals. Moreover, their strategies constitute the public image of activists more than anything, since outsiders form their opinions of activists in reference to the strategies they witness. Understandably, many animal advocates use strategies and tactics that are the most promising in terms of appealing to the public, garnering attention and convincing more people to quit contributing to and to actively combat speciesist exploitation. However, because the dominant culture is oppressive, tactics that resonate well with the mainstream often elicit critical responses from progressives. Therefore, in this section, some gendered, racialized, and classed animal activist strategies are explored in terms of how they reflect the dominant culture of the movement, shape the activist message, and affect how animal activism is perceived. These include reinforcing sexism, racism, classism, sometimes even speciesism while campaigning against animal cruelty, promoting an exclusive vegan or animal activist ideal which is unachievable by and alienating to many underprivileged individuals, and presenting itself as highly rational and devoid of emotion (read: masculine) for more public recognition and influence. Animal activists' disputes over ideological approaches and strategies are also discussed as well as how those that are perceived to be more feminine are often undermined in the movement, mostly by men.

Whom vegans and animal activists try to inform, influence, and recruit is explored in this section in relation to how protests of animal cruelty differ depending on the identity of the offender and the Western cultural interpretation of the act. Often, these seem to carry patterns of favouring privileged individuals over the underprivileged. Here I focus on the presentation of veganism as a universal ethical

requirement and the use of human atrocity analogies for animal abuse. The first assumes certain socioeconomic privilege of the subject while the latter only instrumentalizes suffering and hurts racialized people, unless part of an anti-racist campaign. After acknowledging the limited coverage of racialization and class issues in as well as their relevance to animal advocacy, I discuss possibilities of a more inclusive, intersectional, and anti-oppressive activism, including some proactive measures activist organizations can take to be more welcoming and accommodating. Finally, I examine species politics of animal activists, with an emphasis on the common tendency to disregard nonhumans' communicative capacities and appoint ourselves as their representatives, although our ideological or tactical approaches might not necessarily reflect their best interests. Considering the deeply speciesist (and otherwise oppressive) cultures we have been socialized into, it should be no surprise that, no matter how much we are against it on a conscious level, we are not completely free from speciesism (or any other oppressive ideology) which inevitably manifests itself in our activism.

One such example is the strategy to promote veganism as a weight loss measure while equating being fat with being unhealthy and unattractive (Kolaya-Spealman, 2011). Although the discourse used in such campaigns is not always gender-specific, sizeism and fat-shaming harm women particularly, contributing to the social pressure on them regarding their body shapes (Vorobej, 1997). Some pro-veganism and animal advocate campaigns like PETA's "Save the Whales" (which not only reproduces a misogynistic discourse but also calls whales "fat" through a blatantly anthropomorphic lens) have come under feminist critique for perpetuating thinness as a feminine beauty ideal (Harper, 2011b). Vegan women who self-identify as fat report that, because of this strategy, they feel like they are not good

representatives of veganism, and they lose their sense of belonging to vegan and animal activist circles (Ernst, 2010b; johanna, 2008a; Kolaya-Spealman, 2011).

All activists, understandably, care about how they are being perceived, not only by their peers but also by the people whom they want to influence. However, uncritical pursuit of a reputable image (as an instrument of effective activism) poses the risk of reinforcing oppressive and normative power relations. For instance, a vegan blogger advised fellow animal activists to dress well and use an upper-class accent while advocating for nonhumans (Hammer, 2009b), which obviously is not an option for many underprivileged people whose activist labour is devalued simply because they do not possess the economic or cultural capital required to be reputable in the eyes of the mainstream. Likewise, sexist notions further complicate animal activists' self-portrayal. "Because of the association of politics and political power with masculinity" (Einwohner et al., 2000, p. 681), animal activists who are concerned about the movement's social legitimacy and authority are discontent with its feminization, which they counter through efforts to appear more logical and rational, traits associated with masculinity (Einwohner, 2002a). Groves (1997, p. 127) observed that older animal activists found emotions amateurish and feminine, while younger and more idealistic activists thought that emotions contaminate the purity of the movement's ideology. Even the ones who expressed emotions for animals and against their plight felt the need to justify these emotions intellectually (Groves, 1997, p. 138). Here, the ideal seems to be a purely logical, rational, ideological animal activist image, motivated by the understandable desire to be recognized as a legitimate political movement, which seems to be jeopardized once perceived as emotional and hence feminine in a sexist society.

Although there is no reason to believe that the gender ratio varies in different forms of animal advocacy, day-to-day animal welfare activism is feminized more than direct action efforts towards animal liberation, because although open rescues by some animal activists prioritize promoting empathy and compassion “[in] contrast with the heroic mind-set of the masked warriors” (Kheel, 2006, p. 311), the glamorized radical activist image liberating nonhumans is often a masculine one (Jones, 2004). Some animal activist women accuse fellow activist men of demeaning the concern for companion animal welfare through ridiculing and feminizing it simultaneously (Gaarder, 2011). To overcome the widespread gendered trivialization of their activist labour, some women strive to masculinize their activism, for instance by giving their organization a militaristic name to convey a serious and powerful image (Gaarder, 2011, p. 104), or by taking on more risk: “Sometimes I want to do direct action because I feel like I have to prove myself” (p. 99). Marti Kheel (2006, p. 307) protests this “uncritical endorsement of *heroic* acts” [Emphasis original] which often overshadows “frequent everyday acts of courage.” She continues (2006, p. 316):

Heroism in the Western world is traditionally associated with the notion of courage, sacrifice, and risk, all typical of conceptions of direct actions within the animal rights and environmental movements. The classic hero is also most commonly a male warrior who vanquishes foes and surmounts obstacles in an attempt to overcome “evil.”

Although we shall not dismiss the past and potential benefits of some heroic activism to nonhuman animals, as long as masculinity is uncritically cherished in an animal activist setting, this kind of heroic, individualistic, masculine activist performance would dominate at the expense of other ideological and tactical approaches to activism.

Demonstrating animal activists' self-consciousness regarding their feminine image, Einwohner (2002a, p. 259) quotes an activist woman striving to recruit more men for a hearing with hunters, worried that "a bunch of emotional women shaking their fists," will not be taken seriously. Gaarder (2011, p. 47) reports that many animal activist women she interviewed were preoccupied with providing explanations and justifications for men's absence in the movement, and concerned about how to get more men involved to lend more credibility to the cause. Animal activist blogger Royce (2010) accuses an influential portion of the animal advocacy movement in the Global North of compulsively trying to appeal to and recruit men, including organizations like PETA using sexist discourses or images to promote animal advocacy and prominent theorists such as Tom Regan, Peter Singer, and Gary Francione who downplay emotions, and attempt to present their ethical and political positions as purely rational.

Persistent efforts to appeal to men is only a part of the pattern of animal activists in North America targeting to recruit the privileged. For instance, animal activist literature in the US is not particularly accessible to people with low levels of education, because it is written presuming reading comprehension levels of the 11th grade or higher, which far exceeds the average US adult (Humane Research Council, 2011). High fees animal rights conferences often require jeopardize underprivileged people's access to animal activist messages too (Hammer, 2008a; johanna, 2008b). While online activism is burgeoning, internet access is still a privilege in some impoverished and racialized communities (Brown, 2005b). According to Harper (2011b, p. 222), most texts aiming to promote veganism target a white, middle-class audience, exemplified by the framing of products as "cruelty-free" simply for being vegan while disregarding the cruelty towards racialized people of the Global South in

the production of sugar, cocoa, coffee, and more (Harper, 2010a). Jones (n.d.) argues that animal activists frequently addressing upper- and middle-class consumers while often neglecting outreach to impoverished communities implies that the latter are sometimes not even seen as moral agents worthy of information and assistance to make ethical choices, such as boycotting animal cruelty. Kim Socha (2013, p. 59) warns that “the [animal rights/ liberation] movement's radical political message could easily be marketed away if veganism becomes/remains a Euro-American bourgeois lifestyle choice.”

In contrast to targeting the privileged in outreach and recruitment efforts, animal activists in North America are occasionally accused of targeting the underprivileged more frequently and more harshly while protesting animal exploitation (Elder, Wolch & Emel, 1998a; 1998b; Harper, 2011a; Kim, 2015). Many animal advocates inadvertently reproduce discriminatory discourses and reinforce oppressions in their responses to animal cruelty committed by people oppressed by their gender, racialized, or classed identities (Gaard, 2011; Guither, 1998; Hsiung, 2015; Kheel, 1993; Kim, 2015; Wilson, 2009). For instance, in the rare examples of nonhumans' exploitation being acknowledged in discussions over ethics in fashion, almost all attention is given to fur (Sorenson, 2011b), which is predominantly worn by women and culturally associated with femininity, although the industry has insidiously been expanding to menswear through fur trim. Brian Luke (2007, p. 18) argues that not targeting products that are associated with men (such as leather and suede) nearly as often is sexist. Anti-fur activist efforts have also been aggressive towards women at times. According to Kheel (1993, p. 271):

Some of the anti-fur movement's campaign literature has tended to blame women for the existence of furs. One well-known ad features a woman

dragging a coat behind her, trailing a pool of blood. The words of the ad state,

“It takes 40 dumb animals to make a fur coat, but only one to wear it.”

This animal advocate campaign is ironic in a sense that it is not only misogynistic but also speciesist in insulting nonhuman animals’ intelligence, just like the aforementioned sizeist PETA campaign. In addition to animal abuse in industries traditionally associated with femininity – such as fur and cosmetics – being more frequently and harshly denounced (Luke, 2007), women who commit traditionally masculine forms of animal cruelty also receive disproportionate backlash. For instance, although the overwhelming majority of hunters are men (Kheel, 2006), women hunters abound among the ones that receive negative media publicity, such as Melissa Bachman, Rebecca Francis, Ivy Swanepoel, and 12 year-old Aryanna Gourdin, which demonstrates a sexist double-standard that emerges when women trespass into a traditionally masculine sphere.

Similar to this gendered double-standard, Harper (2011a) and Kim (2015) propose a racialized double-standard in how violence against nonhumans is perceived in the West, where people of colour receive much harsher repercussions than white people for similar acts of animal mistreatment – although some individual examples such as the football star Michael Vick’s abuse of dogs are more complicated due to the offenders’ celebrity status. Similarly, Jones (n.d.) points out that, while the racialized demographics of rodeo enthusiasts do not translate into labeling white people as violent, culturally insensitive reactions to dog- or cock-fighting often serve the strengthening of such prejudicial narratives about Latina/o and Black populations. Similarly, Gaard (2011) reports that the opposition to the Makah whale hunt produced a fertile environment for covert white racism to radicalize. Andrea Smith (as quoted in Johanna, 2009b) expresses concern over demands of the abrogation of treaties that

provide First Nations legal grounds to hunt, because this would jeopardize the legitimacy of all treaties Indigenous people rely on, putting them in a very vulnerable position.

Insensitivity to the identities and social locations of protest targets (and the particularities of their lived realities) sometimes leads to judging other cultures for their cruel treatment of nonhumans without scrutinizing the covert, indirect, but significant violence towards nonhumans one's own ways of living entail. For instance, Barbara Noske (2004) notes that most North American animal activists who are city-dwellers do not problematize the harm their urban, modern, technological ways of life pose for nonhuman animals, through road building for instance, which destroys habitats and causes extinctions, while they might feel entitled to tell Inuit people to move south and change their lifestyles involving subsistence hunting. Moreover, when some antispeciesists express contempt towards humankind as a whole as the ultimate culprit of the harm inflicted on animals and the earth, they fail to grasp that the benefits of being human (which includes exploitation of everything considered less than human) have always been reaped quite unevenly by different human groups (Kim & Freccero, 2013, p. 469-470).

One of these groups that have not been allowed to enjoy their humanity fully is women, while men have disproportionately been the ones exploiting and massacring nonhumans (Adams, 1990; Luke, 2007). Many activists and scholars who consider animal liberation a feminist issue due to the intersections of women's and nonhumans' oppression expect women to sympathize with nonhumans and go vegan. "While some have argued that [veganism] is an ethical requirement for being feminist, other feminists have been openly hostile to it" (Bailey, 2007, p. 40; see also Twine, 2010). Jones (2011, p. 50) explains that many women feel oppressed when

they are asked to go vegan, because they perceive it as yet another example of being told what to do with their own bodies in a patriarchal society; although this also involves overlooking their own speciesist violation of other bodies. Moreover, since meat has historically been considered an exclusive food for the allegedly superior and the privileged, and was not always available to people oppressed because of their gender and racialized identities (Adams, 1990; Bailey, 2007), women as well as some people of colour see eating nonhumans as a way of

reclaim[ing] their right to food (...) This helps explain why [veganism] has sometimes been dismissed as a bourgeois lifestyle choice, one deeply reflective of a privileged identity. Certainly, to be able to turn away nourishment of any kind often says something about one's level of privilege. (Bailey, 2007, p. 45-46).

While the species privilege exerted through non-vegan practices is overlooked, the idea that veganism should be an ethical requirement for being feminist is also considered elitist by some, because it assumes access to a variety of food as well as means to cook, which many impoverished mothers do not have (Bailey, 2007, p. 51; see also Greenebaum, 2016; and Harper, 2011b). According to Bailey (2007, p. 50):

‘feminist contextual vegetarianism’ (...) acknowledge[s] (...) that eating animals may not have the same meaning in all circumstances (...) and cultures; the hunting, killing, and eating of a wild boar need not be thought of as morally equivalent to selecting and eating a segment of a hog's leg from the supermarket by a privileged Westerner.

Similarly concerned about context and circumstances, Ida Hammer (2008b) criticizes some animal activists who villainize fishing communities while campaigning against seal hunts, and argues for increased targeting of the government and corporations that

are responsible for the structure of poverty which deprives people of alternative ways of survival to harming animals. An animal activist approach which includes both respect to cultural context and efforts to lift material barriers between people and less cruel ways of living would certainly be more productive than repeatedly asking them to go vegan for this or that reason.

Of course, this does not mean that animal activists should cease addressing underprivileged groups altogether, but instead carefully construct strategies to avoid contributing to someone else's oppression. Some animal activists, for instance, failed to do so by attempting to associate wearing fur with sex workers and homeless people, hoping to invert the understanding of fur as a status symbol at the expense of two groups that are already marginalized and discriminated against (Johanna, 2009d; Hammer 2009b). An animal activist blogger asked her followers to treat fur-wearers like panhandlers, as if panhandlers must be disrespected, and PETA actually gave homeless people old fur coats stained with red paint, using their need of warmth to transform them into symbols of animal cruelty (Hammer, 2009b). PETA – and some other organizations such as Australia's Animal Liberation Victoria (Wrenn, 2013) – have also been critiqued for using sexualized and objectified female bodies to garner attention (Adams, 2003; Glasser, 2011b; Vegina, 2010; Wrenn, 2015). Because women's denial of a fully human status – which has been a major part of their oppression – is ongoing through descriptions that liken them to nonhumans and nature which are dualistically understood as being inferior to men and culture (Adams, 1990; 2003; Birke cited in Gaarder, 2011b, p. 4), animalized portrayals of women in activist campaigns cause feminist uproars for reinforcing these discourses. A similar protest emerges when animal activists use people of colour's animalized mistreatment in their campaigns. Although some dismiss critiques of such tactics for simply being

speciesist, “if one pays attention to the historical associations, resistance to human-animal comparisons clearly has deep roots” (Bailey, 2007, p. 41).

In her study of grassroots animal rights activists in France and the US, whose politics she describes as mainstream, Elizabeth Cherry (2010) finds that both groups liken themselves to civil rights activists, and use analogies of slavery and the Holocaust for the victimization of nonhumans. This activist strategy is tricky, because no matter how well-intentioned, “trying to tie concerns about racism, sexism, and classism together, (...) can risk appearing to oversimplify in ways that can be damaging” (Bailey, 2007, p. 50). In her assessment of PETA campaigns that used these analogies, Kim (2011) concludes that the strategy is politically questionable because it hinders alliance opportunities among different anti-oppression activist movements by offending many Black and Jewish activists.

Although the opponents of these analogies might have not experienced those horrors themselves, research suggests that trauma can be passed down generations, exemplified by many human and nonhuman communities’ intergenerational trauma, including some elephant communities’ continued hostility towards humans a long time after massacres their grandparents were subjected to (Bradshaw, 2009; Jones, 2006). Furthermore, to demonstrate why certain racialized people still feel uneasy with being associated with nonhumans, Bailey (2007, p. 44) argues: “It is not simply that the ‘animalization’ of Africans and Native Americans justified their mistreatment, but that notions of whiteness and civility were created in contrast to it.” While the milder reactions different movements (such as LGBTQIA+³ and anti-choice activists) receive when they invoke the same analogies expose the role of speciesism

³ Lesbian. Gay. Bisexual. Trans(gender). Queer. Intersex. Asexual. The plus sign represents the diversity of gender and sexual identities, difficult to capture in a short acronym. Some longer versions include Two-Spirit people, questioning individuals, and allies.

in why this strategy is frowned upon more when used by animal advocates (Kim, 2011; see also Socha, 2013; and Szybel, 2006), Harris (2010, p. 86) argues that these analogies

assume a comfort in associating oneself with animals and animal issues that people of color can only assume with difficulty. (I have a visceral repulsion reaction to primates that I believe to be in part race-based: the fear of being seen, by whites, as interchangeable with them.)

Moreover, Jones (2007, p. 195-197) argues that it is much more difficult for oppressed and marginalized people to acknowledge that they too possess privileged identities and can be oppressive to others.

Many Jewish and Black people protest these analogies, and their reasons include being reminded of their historical and present traumas of animalization, the feeling of their suffering being instrumentalized, and that these analogies pose the danger of undermining current struggles against racism and anti-Semitism through creating the impression that the fight against these is already won (Harris, 2010; Kim, 2011). For instance, Africans continue to be enslaved for their labour in the production of substances like coffee and cocoa (Harper, 2010b). Although Kim argued in her 2011 article that PETA's campaign is morally defensible because the analogies do apply, she has since changed her mind, asserting that it is morally untenable to use such analogies simply to further nonhuman advocacy without any effort to challenge historical and contemporary racism (Kim, 2015). Moreover, emphasizing the importance of the identity of whoever uses such analogies, Socha (2013b, p. 232) argues that it is especially problematic for PETA, an organization notorious for insensitive campaigns, to "hijack" other social justice struggles with these strategies.

As an alternative to drawing on human groups' oppression only as far as it benefits nonhuman advocacy, VINE Sanctuary's Martin Luther King Day challenge urges followers to educate themselves on historical and contemporary racism as well as resistance to those, because

As long as vegan and animal rights organizations make no effort to incorporate antiracism into their activities and strategies, white vegans will have the same spectrum of opinions as other white people, including racist opinions. As long as vegan organizations, in particular, encourage people to feel as though personal veganism places one on a higher moral plane than other people, white vegans may be even *less* likely than other white people to sincerely grapple with the question of their own complicity in ongoing racial injustice. (Jones, 2016, para. 10) [Emphasis original.]

Similarly, as an example of showing solidarity without using other social justice struggles as a tool for animal advocacy, Glasser (2015, p. 46) recommends going to a May Day march with a sign that says "Animal Activist in Support of Worker Rights" instead of "Animals are the most exploited workers."

Critiques of instrumentalizing other social justice struggles include charges of appropriation regarding some terminology animal advocates have been using to describe themselves and their activism. For instance, Hammer (2008d) claims that the term liberation has been appropriated in a colonialist manner from Black and women's liberation movements by Peter Singer in his 1975 book *Animal Liberation* which has been highly influential on many animal activists, since his understanding of oppression, equality, and difference fundamentally differ from and misrepresent how these were conceptualized within the political struggles he draws on. Similarly,

according to Jones (2013, p. 275-276), the term abolitionist (as many vegans who follow Gary Francione's teachings self-identify) is linked to whiteness:

While some former slaves became known as 'abolitionists,' abolitionism as such was primarily a white movement (...) While some white abolitionists did try to make common cause with enslaved Africans (...) abolitionism was mostly a process of white people talking with other white people about how to free those other people.

This terminology is likely to be off-putting to many racialized people according to Jones (2013), because it presumes the controversial slavery analogy without an accompanying anti-racist agenda.

Johanna (2008b) and Hammer (2008a) claim that the lack of racial diversity in animal activism is due mainly to white activists' attempts to recruit people of colour as tokens without supporting their struggles in anti-racist coalitions (see also Kim & Freccero, 2013, p. 470). While most texts promoting veganism overlook racialization and class issues, Claire, a vegan blogger of colour (as quoted in Harper, 2011b, p. 222, 234) comments:

I think there is a fundamental difference between asking "How can we get more [people of colour] involved here?" (which maintains the idea that whites are in control of the movement and that is somehow natural or unproblematic and not really a big deal) and asking "What are we doing that makes this issue seem irrelevant or off-putting to POC? How can we change that?"

Despite plentiful ways of demonstrating the connections of speciesism to the lives of people marginalized by their classed or racialized identities, some animal rights conferences do not even include a single panel or workshop on the relevance of class to nonhuman advocacy (Hammer, 2008a). Moreover, an animal activist reports

witnessing the silencing of fellow activists of colour who were asking for more anti-racist and anti-oppressive workshops at future conferences (Erenberg as quoted in Hammer, 2008c).

Yet, it is important that animal activists are cognizant of oppressive racial and class dynamics, for these are deeply entangled with nonhumans' oppression. For instance, workers in speciesist industries are often racialized, impoverished, marginalized people who are forced to do violent work in awful conditions (Coulter, 2016; Eisnitz, 1997; Glasser, 2011b; Lian, 2013; Stull & Broadway, 2013). Nocella (2012, p. 150) recommends that, while campaigning against speciesist businesses, animal activists do not demonize workers but advocate for them too, by demanding anti-poverty measures or assisting them with finding better means of survival (Nocella, 2012, p. 150). Similarly, in order to help people who live in food deserts stop contributing to animal exploitation, animal activists might spearhead the establishment of community gardens and cooperative grocery stores which will provide fresh, healthy and affordable produce to people who do not have access to it (Nocella, 2012). Such proactive strategies are likely to show solidarity and overturn the understanding that animal activists are simply privileged people lecturing others who lack equal opportunities.

Of course, further heterogenizing the demographic constitution of the animal activist movement through the participation of underprivileged communities also requires ensuring that activist organizations are inclusive and welcoming circles in which everyone's gender, racialized, classed and other identities are equally considered. Nocella (2012) shares advice not only animal activists but all activists could benefit from. For the sake of accessibility, meetings and events need to be child-friendly, scheduled for after work hours, and held close to bus stops (Nocella,

2012). Activists should educate themselves about other social justice issues, read the literatures of other movements and make those available at their own events, actively support these movements, be receptive to outside critiques, and constantly self-reflect about their own social, political, and economic privilege (Nocella, 2012; see also the interviews of Hamanaka, 2005; and Hamanaka & Kwan, 2005). While preparing for high-risk activism, activists must consider that arrest might have different consequences for “white able-bodied males who have paid lawyers, college degrees, and socioeconomic privilege” (Nocella, 2012, p. 147) than for impoverished or racialized people who might not be able to afford quality legal representation and would be prone to receive harsher sentences in a racist and classist criminal justice system (see also johanna, 2010b). Such measures would assist in developing a culture in which particular needs and vulnerabilities due to underprivileged identities are respected, and ensuring that animal activist organizations are socially just for all human subjects.

But what about nonhuman subjects? As noted, because of pervasive and deeply-ingrained dominant ideologies, even social justice advocates can reinforce oppressions – including the ones we primarily challenge – through discriminatory discourses or counterproductive tactical choices. Thus, it would be naïve to assume that animal activism is completely free from speciesism. In line with humans' tendency to ascribe our own gendered preconceptions to nonhumans (jones, 2011), one form of speciesism that many including some animal advocates are guilty of is gendered at the same time: Wild animals, such as whales, who are viewed as more autonomous and majestic, are masculinized and held to a higher standard than domesticated animals, such as chickens, who are feminized, and viewed as dependent and dumb (Davis, 1995). As noted, Carol Glasser (2011b) and Deckha (2008)

similarly argue that, in certain problematic campaigns, PETA does not only degrade women and people of colour, but nonhumans too, through their depiction as devoid of agency.

Many people, including many animal activists, fail to acknowledge nonhumans' "sociality, relationality, resistances, and multiple forms of subjectivity" (Corman, 2012, p. 147). Since animal activism is an ally movement where we advocate for the welfare, rights, or liberation of an external group, many of us make the mistake of ascribing ourselves the status of being *the voice of the voiceless* (Corman, 2012). Yet, although they are not adequately listened to by humans, nonhumans do have voices, and interspecies communication is possible to a limited but significant extent, at least enough to recognize certain feelings and the presence or absence of consent (Corman, 2012; Jones, 2013, p. 277; see also Bekoff, 2007; Noske, 1997; Smuts, 2006). Speaking on behalf of the subjects whose liberation is being sought risks further disempowering them "as entitled communities impose their political will and beliefs onto the communities they are trying to liberate" (Colling, Parson, & Arrigoni, 2014, p. 68; see also Corman, 2012, p. 55). This is why Jones (2004) believes that, unless oppressive or proven to be ineffective, there is no justification to dismiss any activist tactic, considering that we do not have any indication of nonhumans wanting us to stop using one or the other. When we represent nonhuman animals as passive and voiceless by denying the communicative aspect of their agency, we emerge in contrast as their heroes and saviours, contrary to a *radical humility* perspective promoted by Lauren Corman and Tereza Vandrovcová (2014). Corman and Vandrovcová (2014) advise the recognition of nonhumans as potential teachers and the prioritization of their voices through more heterogeneous and multifaceted representations of their subjectivities. This approach would prevent us

animal activists from assuming that we know what is best for nonhumans, and aid us in transforming our understanding regarding them from “object-oppression” to “subject-liberation” (Corman & Vandrovcová, 2014, p. 139)

Section summary and proposed contributions to the literature.

Literature suggests that animal activist movements in the Global North are dominated by white people, and that women constitute the majority of activists. Class demographics of animal activists remain contested, although many animal advocacy strategies imply socioeconomic privilege. The limited attention afforded to other social justice issues and the usage of some allegedly insensitive and offensive strategies constitute some of the reasons why the animal activist movements in the Global North fail to appeal to marginalized and underprivileged communities, and to become sites of inclusion and solidarity. Due to unjust internal dynamics amongst activists, women's significant activist labour is devalued, while men disproportionately occupy higher positions in animal advocacy organizations. Inaccessible activist language, insufficient consideration of other social justice issues, and informal hierarchies amongst activists that favour privileged identities alienate women, people of colour, and impoverished people, and impairs their sense of belonging to animal activist communities. Meanwhile, the animal activist movement gets caught up in futile intra-conflicts over ideologies and strategies, and loses unity. While our sometimes speculative and misguided assumptions on what is best for nonhumans dominate animal advocacy both in theory and practice, collectively furthering nonhumans' interests as their allies becomes more challenging.

Of course, it is not fair to paint an all gloomy picture of animal activism. Many animal activists initiate intersectional campaigns, lend support to other social justice movements, and struggle to make their organizations more equitable, inclusive and

welcoming. While diverse animal advocacy organizations sometimes join forces in activist coalitions (Alvarado, 2006), some of the harshest political critiques towards animal activists come from within. Unfortunately, these examples are mostly on the grassroots level and do not receive the public or scholarly attention they deserve. Therefore, in addition to adding to the limited knowledge on animal activists in Canada (but see Montgomery, 2000; and Purdy, 2013), this research project makes an empirical contribution to the literature by studying a grassroots animal activist organization which was characterized by its adoption of exceptionally radical, intersectional, and progressive politics.

Although it is very suitable for studying how complex dynamics of gender, racialization, and class are negotiated and reproduced in an animal activist organizational context, ethnographic research on animal activists is rare (but see Cherry, 2010; Einwohner, 1999; Groves, 1997), which constitutes the methodological contribution of this thesis. Finally, this thesis claims to make a theoretical contribution to the literature through its use of a feminist intersectional approach. Although this paradigm has been widely adopted by scholars, seldom has it informed research on animal activists. Moreover, while feminist and intersectional scholarship in this field has been critiqued for prioritizing certain axes of power (such as gender) which renders others peripheral (Deckha, 2012), gender, racialization and class are equally central to the analysis this research offers, fulfilling the promise of feminist intersectional theory, which is explored in the next section.

Feminist Intersectional Theory

The term *intersectionality* was first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 (McCall, 2005; Nash, 2008; Yuval-Davis, 2006), but the historical roots of intersectional feminism can be traced back to the revisionist feminist theory of the

1960s that refused to accept gender as the sole or even most salient societal factor in shaping women's lived realities (hooks, 1984). In a statement issued in 1977, Combahee River Collective, a Black lesbian feminist group, criticized “the futility of privileging a single dimension of experience as if it constituted the whole of life,” and pledged to fight against class inequality as well as racism, sexism, and heterosexism (Brah & Phoenix, 2004, p. 78). Other feminists of colour such as bell hooks (Brah & Phoenix, 2004; McCall, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2006), Patricia Hill Collins (Knapp, 2005; McCall 2005), and Angela Davis (McCall, 2005) are also recognized as key contributors to feminist intersectional thought. While both feminist and anti-racist studies were “failing to account for lived experience at neglected points of intersection” (McCall, 2005, p. 1780) due to their whiteness and the male-dominance respectively, intersectional theory sought “to give voice to the particularity of the perspectives and needs of women of color who often remained invisible” (Choo & Ferre, 2010, p. 132).

Arguing that the “global sisterhood” projections of feminists in the 1970s and 1980s overlooked power relations divisive of women (Brah & Phoenix, 2004, p. 76), intersectional feminism finds women’s (or any other social group’s) assumed homogeneity essentialist (Hancock, 2007; Nash, 2008; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Because of their differently racialized and classed identities, for instance, womanhood is experienced in a variety of ways by individuals, rendering woman a heterogeneous category. Individual subjects are heterogeneous too, for multiple and often conflicting identities and social locations – that can privilege one racially while disempowering them financially – complicate our experiences (Jones, 2012). Social forces acting on an individual shall not be conceptualized as merely additive, since they are always in a transformative relation with each other (Lykke, 2010). For instance, although an

Asian and an African woman would both experience sexism and racism, not only the racism they experience would be distinct due to the differences between anti-Asian and anti-African discourses, but also their individual experiences of sexism would be racialized depending on their particular identities.

The development of intersectional theory was inspired by race, postmodern, poststructuralist, postcolonial, and queer theories (Davis, 2008, p. 71). Leslie McCall (2005, p. 1771), considers intersectionality “the most important theoretical contribution that women's studies, in conjunction with related fields, has made so far.” Since “the origins of intersectionality are multiple and intersecting” (Hancock, 2007, p. 249), it has been adopted, developed, and utilized by many scholars with differing ontological and epistemological positions; hence the absence of a dominant canon that represents the entire field (Lykke, 2010, p. 49). Both structuralists who focus on systemic and institutional forms of power and poststructuralists who prioritize more mundane and personal articulations of power adopt intersectional feminism (Carbin & Edenheim, 2013; Lykke, 2010). According to Nina Lykke’s (2010, p. 50) comprehensive and broad definition, feminist intersectionality is

a theoretical and methodological tool to analyze how historically specific kinds of power differentials and/or constraining normativities, based on discursively, institutionally and/or structurally constructed sociocultural categorizations such as gender, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, age/generation, dis/ability, nationality, mother tongue and so on, interact, and in so doing produce different kinds of societal inequalities and unjust social relations.

Emphasizing the complexities of social reality, Gudrun-Alexi Knapp (2005, p. 263) writes:

In the 19th and 20th centuries, European societies develop as *simultaneously* modern, bourgeoispatriarchal, national and capitalist societies. Analyses focusing on only one of these respective structural characteristics (the modern, patriarchal rule, national constitution, the capitalist mode of production) will not be able to discern the specific *constellation* of interdependent structures whose reconfiguration we witness in the wake of European integration and globalization. [Emphases original.]

As exemplified in this excerpt, “attention to dynamic processes, and variation by context are all understood as inherent in intersectionality” (Choo & Ferre, 2010, p. 134). In fact, Lykke (2010, p. 51) argues that identities need to be thought of as verbs rather than nouns, since they are not fixed or static. Avtar Brah and Ann Phoenix (2004, p. 77) write: “[W]hat we call ‘identities’ are not objects but processes constituted in and through power relations.”

“[A] tool that can be used to analyze how individual subjects negotiate the power-laden social relations and conditions in which they are embedded” (Lykke, 2010, p. 51), feminist intersectionality is a suitable paradigm for analyzing activist organizing and social movement dynamics, because those spheres not only host a heterogeneity of subjects but are also organized through the intersections of gender, racialization, and class relations (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 198). Moreover, while some fields have been “saturated” with analyses prioritizing one form of inequality (such as gender being at the centre of family research) (Walby quoted in Choo & Ferre, 2010, p. 135), animal activism seems to be an area where a more even manifestation of various social power dynamics can be observed. Hence, abiding by its principle of

researcher self-reflexivity in line with its emphasis on subjectivities (Davis, 2008; Lykke, 2005), I employ an intersectional feminist theoretical paradigm for studying the gender, racialization, and class dynamics amongst animal activists, and their effects on the activism.

Intersectionality has increasingly been adopted in the scholarly work on and for nonhuman animals, especially since the foundation of the field of Critical Animal Studies (Nocella, Sorenson, Socha, Matsuoka, 2014; Sorenson, 2014). To give few examples of scholars who embrace intersectionality, Harper (2011a, p. 76) suggests that ending racism requires recognizing its connections to the social construction of animality, while speciesism cannot be adequately analyzed in isolation from racism, whiteness, or other salient forms of oppressions and their manifestations. According to Billy-Ray Belcourt (2015), nonhumans should also be recognized as colonial subjects, and both animal liberation and decolonization projects would be incomplete unless activists acknowledge the relevance of and draw on each other's philosophies. Calling animal liberation a feminist project, Jones (2004, p. 139) argues that "speciesism and sexism are so closely related that one might say they are the same thing under different guises" and because forms of oppression considered separate are in fact "just different symptoms of the same injury" (2006, p. 321), "the radical feminist project of exposing and uprooting the sources of sexism will necessarily require uncovering and dislocating the roots of speciesism" (2004, p. 144). Similarly, Luke (2007, p. 23) believes that "the struggle for animal liberation is also a struggle against manhood defined by sexism." Lynda Birke (2002, p. 429) is one of many who argue that "politics that ignore other oppressions cannot be liberatory politics for anyone." Glasser (2011b, p. 51) echoes: "All oppression is rooted in the same system of domination and so embracing any form of oppression reinforces all oppressions."

Considering that humans are animals too, Jones (2004) asserts that total animal liberation requires the abolition of all human oppressions by definition. Through an intersectional lens, invaluable knowledge has been produced in academia regarding how species and other hierarchical categories of difference were socially constructed simultaneously or in relation to each other, and how they coarticulated in complex webs of social power dynamics, which is explored in the next section.

Species and the Rest: Intersections of Oppressions

“People have always lived around other species. (...) Animals were central to the formation of every human society and mode of production on the planet.”

– Kendra Coulter (2016, p. 4-5)

Feminist intersectional thought has influenced various academic fields, including Critical Animal Studies, which has adopted intersectionality as one of its significant theoretical principles (Nocella, Sorenson, Socha, Matsuoka, 2014; Sorenson, 2014). CAS scholars have employed intersectionality in exploring the coconstitution of oppressions amongst both human and nonhuman animals. There is ample evidence of the connections between the suffering of nonhuman animals and of oppressed human groups such as women, people of colour, the working class, and many more. Being harmed by the same offender, through the same patterns, and one's exploitation intensifying another's oppression are recurrent themes in this literature. This section outlines these historical and contemporary intersections in a wide variety of topics including hunting, zoos, domestic violence, animal companionship, and slaughterhouses. As well as material intersections, discourses that reinforce the oppression of human and nonhuman groups are comparatively analyzed.

While investigating the roots of perceived racial superiority, Jones (2007, p. 9-10) discovered how deeply speciesism is ingrained in the historical development of racism:

Three years into my research, I found myself back in prehistory, looking at the intersection of patriarchy (male rule) and pastoralism (animal herding) and trying to explain how and why some people became so [misguided] as to believe themselves to be different than and superior to all other animals.

Research also suggests that egalitarian gender dynamics of human societies have started shifting towards men's rule after nonhumans' domestication and recognition as men's property (Holden & Mace, 2003). Since then, "[w]omen and animals, along with land and children, have historically been seen as the property of male heads of households" (Jones, 2004, p. 139). According to Best (2009, p. 197), "*speciesism provided the conceptual paradigm that encouraged, sustained, and justified western brutality toward other peoples*. Throughout history our victimization of animals has served as the model and foundation for our victimization of each other" [Italics original].

Among many feminist analyses of the subordination of women and other oppressed groups, the nature-culture binary of Western thought – which presupposes the superiority of the latter over the former – has been a central target of ecofeminist critiques (Kheel, 1993). Kheel (2006, p. 308) argues that, through this lens, both women and nonhuman animals are perceived as "pure and innocent (...) damsels in distress, helpless victims who must be rescued (...) devoid of independent identity, passive objects which reinforce the autonomous masculine self." Racialized people, including First Nations, have also been associated with nature in this hierarchical binary by being denied reason, which has been considered an identifying

characteristic of humanity (Bailey, 2007; Harris, 2010). “This makes it even clearer why discussions about the rights of people of color, white women, and animals have often centered on how rational such beings are.” (Bailey, 2007, p. 43). Glasser (2011b) argues that both racism and sexism has maintained historically through the assertion of the target group as closer to nature and nonhuman animals.

These entanglements of oppression often manifest in language in the form of insults. According to Best (2009, p. 197), “western aggressors engaged in wordplay before swordplay,” calling their victims animal names such as pig, rat, swine, monkey, and beast, as a means of supposed degradation. Likewise, Joan Dunayer (1995) explores how speciesism and misogyny overlap in language through simultaneously feminized and animalized slurs (see also Adams, 1990; Birke, 2002; Deckha, 2009). As well as people of colour and women, members of the working class have also been characterized as pests and vermin (Corman, 2011, p. 39). Similar dominant discourses are used to reinforce and justify the oppression and exploitation of many different groups (Glasser, 2011b, p. 61). Sorenson (2010, p. 19) explores the proximity between speciesist and racist propaganda efforts that portray the disempowered group as “eagerly offering themselves,” and enjoying their subordination (for the sexist version of the same propaganda see Adams, 1990; 2003). Harper (2011a) shares another parallel through a childhood anecdote: When she refused to kill a worm in the fifth-grade, she was told by her teacher that worms do not feel pain, just like what was said about black people by pro-slavery whites (see also Harris, 2010).

Of course, these discourses correspond to parallels between nonhumans’ and underprivileged human groups’ lived experiences of oppression. Adams (1990) explores the similarity between the exploitation of women and nonhuman animals

through the cycle of objectification, fragmentation, and consumption to which these groups are subject. Although both women and nonhuman animals are objectified and fragmented (i.e. reduced to their body parts), while nonhumans are consumed literally, women's consumption is (mostly) only in the form of degraded and sexualized imagery (Adams, 1990). By coining the term *feminized protein*, Adams (1990) emphasizes the intensified plight of female nonhumans in dairy and egg industries, who suffer disproportionately through the manipulation and exploitation of their reproductive capacities. Harper (2007, para. 18) states that enslaved Black women were forced to breastfeed slave owners' children, and to give birth to more slaves, which is “frighteningly similar to the suffering chickens and cows go through.” Jones (2007, p. 17) points out that the bodies and lives of many women around the world are controlled by men, including vital medical decisions, just like many nonhuman animals who are considered property.

Such frightening similarities are abundant in the mistreatment of nonhuman animals and racialized people. Victoria Johnson (2011) documents that animalization is a common characteristic of fascist ideologies which try to assert the dominance of a supposedly superior human population over a supposedly inferior other.

Dehumanization through simultaneous racialization and animalization has been a pattern in the efforts of Westerners to exclude subordinated groups from the realm of civilization and justify their exploitation (Bailey, 2007; Elder, Wolch & Emel, 1998a; 1998b). Black people were represented as a different species to legitimize their enslavement, as well as Aboriginal people in Australia (Deckha, 2012). Parallels between nonhuman exploitation and forms of atrocious intra-human violence such as slavery (Spiegel, 1996) and the Holocaust (Davis, 2004; 2005; Patterson, 2002; Szttybel, 2006) have been documented.

Despite the dominance of historical examples, animalized racism goes on in the 21st century (Harris, 2010; Sorenson, 2009).

These nostalgic associations, like the associations between people of African descent and monkeys, did not go away when the twentieth or even the twenty-first century dawned. The peculiar use of Indians as sports mascots – still considered unproblematic by many, because it is supposed to be “complimentary” – is a dramatic example. (Harris, 2010, p. 82)

Transforming the marginalized other into a spectacle for the oppressor's gaze has been an ongoing pattern in the history of intersecting oppressions, and captivity has been an enabling tool for this purpose (Sorenson, 2008). Considered less than human simply because of their disabilities, abnormalities, or even exceptionally old age, people have been exploited in zoos through being displayed as freaks (Sorenson, 2008; Taylor, 2011). Vasile Stanescu (2012) documents how Igorots and Filipinos, two Indigenous peoples of the Philippines, were also put on display in zoos in early twentieth century being considered nonhuman animals, as well as how US soldiers posed with Iraqi political prisoners in Abu Ghraib just like hunters pose with the bodies of the nonhuman animals they kill.

The abuse of these political prisoners involved sexual humiliation including feminization (Stanescu, 2012), another experience they have in common with nonhumans killed by sports hunters, who are disproportionately men (Kalof, Fitzgerald, & Baralt, 2004; Kheel, 2006; Luke, 2007). While hunting equipment is usually metaphorically understood as masculine, hunters mostly present their prey as feminine, even when the animal is male (Kalof, Fitzgerald & Baralt, 2004). The chase is conveyed in an erotic tone in hunters' narratives, while the kill resembles an orgasm (Kheel, 2006, p. 38). Luke (2007) discusses how hunters express their desire

to possess and subordinate nonhumans through a discourse of dominant sexuality, how they eroticize power difference, and call violence in the form of killing an act of love. Men's violence towards others whom they supposedly love can also be observed in the contexts of domestic, partner, and child abuse. When overlaps between men's violence towards women, children, and companion animals are explored, some patterns emerge such as men abusing women, children, and nonhumans simultaneously, physically abusive men having a history of violence towards nonhumans, and men threatening women and children with harming or killing their companion animals to keep them silent and force them to cooperate (Adams, 1990; Glasser, 2011b). Jones (2004, p. 141) assumes that many women (who had no access to a shelter that allows nonhumans) must have been killed because they did not want to leave their companion animals behind.

Nonhumans' and oppressed human groups' abuse by the same offenders and in similar patterns has many examples, some of which had major influence in the shaping of history. For instance, David Nibert (2013) explains how nonhumans and human populations suffered simultaneously throughout the colonization of North America when European colonizers shipped cattle to Americas (which was already a painful experience for the non-consenting animals) and used them as a weapon of war towards the Natives (see also Armstrong, 2002). Because European colonizers used cows to harm Indigenous communities' crops with the intention of displacing them and seizing their lands, while also waging brutal wars and massacring them for harming said cows (read: property), Nibert (2013) believes that the colonization of Americas would not have been possible without the instrumentalized exploitation of cows. A more active nonhuman participation to historical change is documented by Jason Hribal (2003; 2007), who argues that nonhumans must be considered members

of the working-class since they have shaped history with their labour and resistance, especially by necessitating steam power and accelerating the Industrial Revolution in Europe. In Canada, John Sorenson (2010) argues that nonhumans' suffering has a mutual history with the erosion of Indigenous cultures and the irreversible damage done to First Nations communities through their exploitation by white settlers for fur and skin trades. On another occupied land, Palestinian Animal League (PAL) reports that Israeli authorities intimidate Palestinians with dogs who are later let loose on Palestinian territory, only leading to more violence between two oppressed groups that are deliberately pitted against each other (Kuchirka & Kuchirka, 2016).

jones (2006, p. 329) observes nonhumans' shared fate of suffering with the most impoverished humans as a result of poverty that is induced by civilization:

When, as is so often the case, poverty forces people into places formerly controlled by animals, then tragedy is sure to follow. One way or another, somebody who doesn't deserve to die is going to end up dead. People in aggregate already have more than we need but because resources are not shared equitably, starving people often end up competing with starving animals on the outskirts of so-called civilization.

Yet, nonhumans have been suffering side by side with impoverished humans in more civilized, urban contexts as well. When Leslie Irvine (2004; 2013) investigated the history of class dynamics behind the regulations around dog companions in Western Europe and the United States, she found that keeping particular types of dogs who were used in hunting was either outlawed for the working class or hampered through mandatory licenses and tax; although, unlike the upper class that saw hunting as a noble sport, impoverished people used to hunt for necessary subsistence. In England and France, the impoverished could only keep mastiff-type dogs if they were

expediated, i.e. middle toes of their front paws chopped off, in order to make sure that they could not be used in hunting (Irvine, 2013, p. 47).

Suffering alongside each other have nurtured a sense of solidarity amongst nonhumans and certain human groups, exemplified by Hribal's (2007) claim that the early vegetarian movement arose from working-class humans seeing themselves as equals with their nonhuman colleagues, thus refusing to eat them. Many people choose not to eat meat because of anti-racist and class-based reasons (Glasser, 2011a; Harper, 2010b). A class-based rationale to refrain from consuming animal flesh is not so much about viewing nonhumans as colleagues anymore but related to the harmful effects of speciesist industries on workers and impoverished communities (Harper, 2010b). One would characterize slaughterhouses primarily through their violence towards nonhumans, because, by definition, they are sites of these animals' mass-murder. Yet, meat and poultry industry in North America hurts marginalized and impoverished humans as well (Eisnitz, 1997; Stull & Broadway, 2013). It moves its business to small, remote, impoverished towns where people hardly get by, manipulates them into welcoming the industry with promises of jobs while actively discrediting those who are correctly worried about health impacts, pollution, and reduction of property values (Stull & Broadway, 2013, p. 169-171; see also Irvine, 2009, p. 112-115).

Slaughterhouses in North America recruit workers predominantly from vulnerable populations, such as undocumented immigrants, and subject them to unsafe, undignified, and exploitative working conditions (Eisnitz, 1997; Stull & Broadway, 2013; Glasser, 2011b). In an interview, the late Virgil Butler (2005), who stopped working at slaughterhouses and became a vegan animal rights activist, shared that convicts of violent crimes are hired too, because they tolerate awful working

conditions rather than jeopardize their parole. Slaughterhouse workers often get hurt because of the fast line speed and neglected maintenance of equipment, while injury reports are discouraged and rarely taken seriously (Eisnitz, 1997; Stull & Broadway, 2013). Workers report racism and cultural discrimination, work for low wages, are denied pay for necessary preparation times, are tricked into unpaid extra work, and still have to depend on federal and state assistance programs, local charities and food banks despite they work full time (Stull & Broadway, 2013, p. 96, 104-105; see also Eisnitz, 1997; and Lian, 2013). Slaughterhouse work has adverse psychological impacts on the workers, makes them aggressive and more prone to committing physical and sexual violence towards humans (Lian, 2013), exemplified by increased crime rates in areas around slaughterhouses in the US (Fitzgerald, Kalof, & Dietz, 2009).

The end product of this violent process, meat, continues to harm underprivileged people through the adverse health impacts of its consumption when it “is incorporated in the country’s free lunch programs, and is fed to the poorest of the country’s children” in the US (Glasser, 2011b, p. 54). Deckha (2012, p. 534) states that “in the Western context mass-produced and heavily subsidized animal flesh is often cheaper to buy—and thus more accessible to low-income communities—than fruits and vegetables,” which partly explains some classed as well as racialized health deficiencies (Danielle, 2010; Harper, 2010b; Schlosser cited in Glasser, 2011a; Williams-Forson, 2010). Likewise, dairy products derived from the exploitation of cows' mammary glands, ironically, increase the risk for ovarian and breast cancers in women (Jones, 2005).

In a chapter addressing her fellow anti-racist activists, Harper (2010b) argues that one’s consumption habits must be aligned with their social justice agendas. She

explains how factory farming reinforces environmental racism through overuse and pollution of water, and misuse and contamination of large fertile land that can potentially grow nutritious produce, while hundreds of millions of racialized people are facing water scarcity and undernourishment in impoverished countries (Harper, 2010b). She adds that, deforestation in order to make grazing land for cattle means genocide for the Indigenous tribes residing in tropical forests, which recycle and purify world's water, while water privatizations injure impoverished people of the Global South (Harper, 2010b). Sorenson (2010, p. 12) argues that “historically, processes of intensified animal exploitation are linked to human hunger;” for instance, although it is justified as a means of food production, “[i]n Africa, commercial cattle ranching for export was directly linked to the Sahel famine of 1968 to 1974 in which 100,000 people died” (Sorenson, 2011a, p. 233). Alka Chandna (2002), notes that many countries in the Global South have been exporting grains to the Global North as animal feed so that First World citizens can keep eating animals, while the peoples of these impoverished countries are struggling with famines themselves.

Despite what the connections between speciesism and various forms of human oppression would suggest, in many cases throughout history, “animal-protection efforts were a vehicle for sustaining power relations between dominant and subordinate groups” (Irvine, 2004, p. 53), including the usage of animal welfare and rights concerns by institutions and people who do not share a consistent sentiment for nonhumans as excuses to limit and control the behaviours of oppressed groups. For instance, David Wilson (2009) documents how foreign animal trainers “with unpronounceable names” (p. 157) were banned from circuses in Britain after the First World War on the basis that they were cruel to animals, while British trainers were supposedly not. Similarly, Sorenson (2011b) posits that the fur industry proposes a

false dichotomy of humane and inhumane practices where the latter is associated with China so that Western cruelty can dodge criticism. While certain human groups' cruel treatment of nonhumans (such as religious sacrifices of Muslims) is used in a culturally imperialist manner to dehumanize them (Elder, Wolch & Emel, 1998a; 1998b), animal protection laws tend to target practices of non-Westerners, arbitrarily favour certain species over others, and do not project much concern for the nonhumans who suffer through acts that are deemed acceptable in the Western culture (Elder, Wolch & Emel, 1998a; 1998b; Deckha, 2007; 2012; 2013). Deckha (2012; 2013) adds that this pattern of defining ethical standards in reference to Western norms involves denying certain communities a civilized status due to the standing and treatment of women in their cultures.

When a cultural practice of a non-Western population is protested by Westerners, defensiveness is no surprise, exemplified by the Japanese nationalist discourses in favour of dolphin hunts (DuPré Pesmen, Stevens & Psihoyos, 2009). Cockfighting too – whose criminalization in Britain in the 19th century demonstrates the desire of the upper class to discipline the proletariat (Guither, 1998, p. 1) – was further embraced as a part of nationalist imagery in Cuba, Philippines, and Puerto Rico, after the US American uproar was interpreted as a colonialist element of US imperialism (Davis, 2013). Recent public outcry over the Yulin Dog Meat Festival certainly involved culturally imperialist reactions and reproduced an anti-Chinese, racist discourse (see Hsiung, 2015; see also Johanna, 2009c; and Hammer, 2009a). While Chinese cruelty towards animals find mainstream publicity in the media, Chinese activists who protest against this cruelty are ignored even when they liberate nonhumans (Anita Krajnc, personal communication, November 24, 2015).

As exemplified by the body of research compiled above, oppression and exploitation of all animals, human and nonhuman, are deeply entangled. Literature contains analyses that exclusively focus on the connections species has to gender, to racialization, and to class, as well as some more comprehensive studies that take multiple of these into account. After acknowledging that most intersectional scholarship on and for nonhumans is produced by feminists (Deckha, 2008), Deckha (2012, p. 529) points out a trend in which gender tends to play the “starring role,” whereas other axes are referred to in a secondary way, which she describes as “the methodological inadequacy of only a gendered analysis of posthumanist issues” (p. 536). Deckha (2012) and Kim (Kim & Freccero, 2013) express the need for more feminist work for nonhuman animals that explicitly theorize race. Glasser (2011a, p. 317) adds that animal liberation theory “should be able to speak to the economically disadvantaged and the working class, since exploitation of nonhuman animals, the poor, and workers are integrally tied in a system of capital that benefits only those who hold positions of economic power.” Such critiques have been taken into account throughout all stages of this research including dissemination. The methodological procedures I followed while collecting and analyzing data are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: Research Design

This chapter aims to explain the scientific path this study has taken to answer its research questions. For this purpose, I outline my research paradigm, methodology, methods of data collection, technique of analyzing data, and various limitations I encountered throughout this research. The ethical framework of the project is also covered in this chapter, as well as the relevant narrative of my pursuit of data, which illuminates the social setting and context of this research. Although I maintain self-reflexivity throughout the chapter, a separate section is also allocated for the discussion of how my identities and social locations – as a newly immigrated animal activist researcher of colour – might have shaped this research process.

As noted in first chapter, this research project initially set out to answer the research question, “How do ACT’s demographic constitution, internal organizational dynamics, and activist strategies influence its capacity to function as a socially just animal activist organization for human and nonhuman subjects?” Because, unexpectedly, ACT disbanded in the midst of the research project and the most recent ACT organizers did not show any interest in being interviewed, new research questions needed to be formulated that frame the investigation of ACT as an animal activist experiment, a case study of a grassroots organization with radical, intersectional politics: “How did ACT’s radical politics manifest in the anti-Business activist context, and what messages does this case study carry for improving animal activist organizing from an intersectional lens?”

Anti-Business activist context refers to the complex web of social relations around the animal activist campaign against The Business between ACT, other activists, patrons of The Business, the owner of the facility, the media, and so forth. What is meant by ACT’s radical politics is not only what this group stood for in

theory, but also how its organizers reflected its principles in their activist organizing including their interactions with other animal activists. Both of these topics are unpacked in Chapter Four. As outlined in Chapter Two, an intersectional lens that attends to the coarticulations of gender, racialization, and class dynamics was adopted to analyze how these complicated this case study of animal activist organizing.

Organizational ethnography and Grounded Theory

According to Dvora Yanow and Karin Geuijen (2009, p. 254), “observing (with whatever degree of participating), talking to people, and the close reading of research-relevant organizational documents, in some combination” constitutes organizational ethnography, while John Van Maanen (1979, p. 539) argues that it entails “lengthy, continuous, firsthand involvement in the organizational setting under study.” Although this study fulfills these requirements, because the most recent ACT organizers could not be interviewed and ACT’s organizational, decision-making spheres could not be more thoroughly observed, I refrain from characterizing this research as an organizational ethnography. Nevertheless, this thesis is an ethnographic research on the animal activists protesting The Business, not only for utilizing ethnographic methods of data collection such as participant observations (Yanow & Geuijen, 2009), but also because “any social study [is] at least partially ethnographic if it allows a researcher to become immersed in the everyday life of the observed” (Van Maanen, 1979, p. 539).

To provide the rich and detailed observational and experiential data my research questions required in order to be answered, I used a triangulation of multiple methods of data collection. “In social research the term ‘triangulation’ is used to refer to the observation of the research issue from (at least) two different points” (Flick, 2004, p. 178). Although multiple phenomena including the combination of qualitative

and qualitative methods and the cooperation of multiple observers (as a measure of objectivity in research) are also referred to as triangulation in the literature (Flick, 2004), in qualitative research, triangulation is understood as ensuring the reliability, validity, and trustworthiness of data as well as the rigor of the entire study through complementary data collection methods (Golafshani, 2003). According to Uwe Flick (2004, p. 180), “triangulation occurs when ethnographic methods of extended participation and field observation are deliberately combined with the use of (career-biographical or episodic) interviews with individual actors at individually agreed times.”

Considering that ethnography aims for “the analytical description of a culture” (Van Maanen, 1979, p. 539) – the culture of anti-Business animal activism in this case – I needed to draw on the knowledge and experiences of the subjects in this setting, the anti-Business animal activists. Grounded Theory stood out as the most proper methodology to utilize in this project, for it allowed the theory to be shaped by and thus reflect the lived realities of these activists. Mostly due to its emphases on the fluidity of the research process, contextuality, the simultaneous collection and analysis of data, and the theory emerging inductively from within the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), Grounded Theory proved to be an appropriate choice for this ethnographic case study.

Grounded Theory was introduced into the research literature in 1967 by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Simply put, this methodology means building the theory through the continuous collection and comparative analysis of data, in other words, grounding the theory in the data. In an era characterized by the domination of quantitative and widespread skepticism about qualitative research (Charmaz, 2006), Grounded Theory assisted the latter in its

recognition as a legitimate scientific approach by clearly demonstrating how theory can be embedded in the qualitative data (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). After its foundation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), Grounded Theory has been continuously used and developed by many scholars, providing this methodology a rich and dynamic canon. Although Glaser and Strauss started to differ on certain methodological preferences after the latter teamed up with Juliet Corbin (1994; 1998) to further develop Grounded Theory, disagreements between the co-founders were not fundamental or divisive (Heath & Cowley, 2004). They differed on topics such as the researchers' engagement with the literature, formulation of a research question, coding procedures, and writing of memos. which did not lead to an ontological or epistemological divide in the Grounded Theory canon, but only enriched this methodology (Heath & Cowley, 2004). The most central difference between the approaches of Glaser and Strauss is the former's ongoing prioritization of induction while the latter has shifted towards elevating the role of deduction in verification and validation of theory (Heath & Cowley, 2004). In this sense, this research adopts more of a Glaserian approach of Grounded Theory. Similarly, while Strauss and Corbin suggested more rigid guidelines for coding, I have taken a more flexible approach towards the data, which consisted of inductively coding the data over repeated reviews and using Glaser's constant comparative method to make sense of the emerging theory in relation to the wider narrative of the research context (Heath & Cowley, 2004).

After the divide between Glaser and Strauss, scholars kept using and developing Grounded Theory; one of the most prominent was Kathy Charmaz (2000), who is a main representative of the constructivist approach to this methodology, which assumes that both theory and data are co-constructed by the researcher and the participants. Despite the variety of approaches to Grounded Theory, this methodology

has consistently retained its defining characteristics in all versions (Heath & Cowley, 2004); and is very applicable to this research project, mainly because of its emphasis on the value of all data however small, the significance of process both within the studied context and the research itself, and the importance of constant researcher reflexivity (Corbin & Strauss, 2000). Because it grew out of my casual conversations with other animal activists about ACT, this research project demonstrates a key principle of Grounded Theory, the interrelation of data collection and analysis, which requires that “the analysis begins as soon as the first bit of data is collected” (Corbin & Strauss, 2000, p. 6). Indeed, every stage of this thesis has been constantly influenced and shaped by many activists’ formal and informal contributions. For this very reason, and with the consideration of the challenges of protecting participants’ anonymity in qualitative, ethnographic studies, especially such small-scale ones (Van den Hoonaard, 2003), a discussion of the ethical framework of this research is necessary.

Research ethics

This study received ethics clearance from Brock University Research Ethics Board with the file number 14-020. It involves no funding or conflict of interest and is a minimal risk study for not posing any risks for participants greater than they might encounter in their everyday lives. No compensation was offered for participating and there was no penalty for not doing so. The possible risk of some activists feeling obligated to participate because of their acquaintance or activist solidarity with me was taken into consideration, and potential participants were clearly advised to not assume that they owed me an interview for those reasons. Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason with no sanction, and demand that their interview records be destroyed. In the processes of obtaining informed consent

and approval for the accuracy of interview transcripts, they were clearly and repeatedly reminded of this right, both verbally and in writing.

Confidentiality of data was respected, and all names of individuals, organizations, and institutions were anonymized through being replaced with pseudonyms. The geographical region is broadly identified as Canada, and the term *regional* is used to refer to an area composed of the city in which The Business is located, and a few nearby cities where most anti-Business protestors live. The Business is simply defined as a human entertainment facility which profits from exploiting captive nonhumans. Because animal activists are an already persecuted group, and a few activists involved in the anti-Business campaign were already struggling with politically regressive lawsuits, I considered it a vulnerable population, thus was cautious about what data to disclose and how. Especially because of the ongoing tensions between anti-Business activists, I assumed that the regional activist community could be harmed if ACT or The Business is identified. Therefore, I omitted certain details while providing the history and context of the anti-Business animal activism, and based this section on the interview data.

Since members may be able to identify each other in the final report despite pseudonyms, anonymity is always challenging in longitudinal and ethnographic research on relatively small communities (Farrimond, 2013) such as the studied animal activists. At least to ensure that activists are not identified by outsiders, I refrained from directly citing any material that could lead to ACT or The Business through an online search, acknowledging the new challenges to maintaining anonymity imposed by the internet (Farrimond, 2013, p. 131). Although these measures needed the elimination of some data which would have strengthened the analysis, they were necessary for the safety and well-being of the regional animal

activist community. As Susan Tilley (2016) writes, “data may be extremely useful to the study [but] must be excluded if possibilities exist for their inclusion to breach ethical respectful praxis.” Although this research promises no direct benefits to the researcher or the participants, it is intended to benefit all animal activists indirectly through serving as a resource for building a more inclusive, socially just and thus bigger and stronger social justice movement.

Methods of data collection

This ethnographic study analyzes qualitative data collected through three methods: participant observations, in-depth interviews, and content analysis on social media. Participant observations occurred at demonstrations organized by ACT (and occasionally at various animal or other social justice activist events) as well as at an organizational meeting of ACT. These observational data were supplemented with in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted with regional animal activists face to face. Additional textual data from ACT’s public social media activity were mainly gathered on Facebook, where ACT used to promote its activism and interact with the attendees of the demonstrations they organized. While this triangulation proved very useful for the ethnographic research, some types of data ended up being more central in answering the research questions. The small amount of textual data, still valuable, ended up being the most peripheral, while the 26-hour long interview records emerged as the primary source of data. Hence, I describe these data collection processes in that order, ending the discussion with the interviews, about which I have more to say than about other methods.

Textual data.

ACT organizers utilized social media to a significant extent. ACT had its own website, and multiple social media accounts. Through these venues, ACT organizers

created and circulated their own content, such as an advisory document for parents who want to stop school trips to The Business. They also used social media to announce and advertise their protests to mobilize a larger opposition to The Business. They shared posters and other campaign materials online to reach a broader audience and increase awareness regarding the animal cruelty going on at The Business. In addition to sharing updates through their social media accounts, ACT organizers created event pages on Facebook for the demonstrations they were organizing. They utilized these online venues to share helpful information with potential attendees, including public transportation options and free parking spots near the protest site. Likewise, these virtual spaces allowed the attendees to interact with ACT organizers, asking questions and giving feedback before and after demonstrations. The textual data I gathered are composed of the information available on ACT's social media, including what the organizers shared with ACT's followers and their correspondence with visitors of these online venues, most of whom were animal activists themselves.

These textual data collected on social media are significant for this thesis for two reasons. First, as noted in the previous chapter and as will be further discussed in this one, the most recent organizers of ACT could not be interviewed for this thesis. Although some interviewees had been ACT organizers during different periods of time, these textual data and my participant observations ended up being the only two methods which allowed me to understand how the most recent ACT organizers did activism. Secondly, because this research is aimed at exploring how ACT's application of its radical, intersectional, anti-oppressive politics contributed to its successes or failures in operating as a socially just activist organization for all animals including humans, some of ACT organizers' interactions with the attendees of their demonstrations also proved relevant. Although these outsiders are the least likely to

know about the leadership structure and internal dynamics of ACT, their interpretations of those were apparent in some of their interactions with this organization, which contributed to my understanding of the public image ACT had in this activist context.

While gathering these textual data, I did not use a systemic data collection method. Instead, while spending time on ACT's social media as I naturally would have as an animal activist in the region, I recorded anything that was relevant to my research question. Updates about the anti-Business campaign made by ACT organizers were parts of these data, as well as interactions between ACT organizers and attendees of ACT demonstrations. Although these data are available for public access on social media, I kept my records confidential as I did with the rest of the data. While reporting on the textual data, I either replaced names with pseudonyms, or simply left individuals unidentified.

Participant observations.

Participant observations mostly occurred at anti-Business demonstrations ACT organized but also sporadically at various other activist spaces in the region. After talking to Bob, a key ACT organizer, about my intention to join and study ACT's activism and receiving group consent, I started contacting him before ACT demonstrations to offer assistance. I often accepted rides from Bob to and from these demonstrations, helped set up in the beginning and pack up at the end. This way, I had the opportunities of making myself useful to ACT and its activism, getting acquainted with Bob and sometimes other ACT organizers or animal activists who happened to be catching a ride with him, and having conversations with them on interesting topics concerning activism, most of which also relevant to this research. Of course, acknowledging that activists on these trips were not giving interviews, I treat these

observations much more carefully. I neither use any direct quotations from nor identify anyone in these conversations, only occasionally drawing on these for general observations.

In addition to six anti-Business protests organized by ACT, I had the opportunity to attend and observe various relevant demonstrations. Four of these were protests against The Business organized by an independent activist in collaboration with animal activist groups other than ACT. Due to disagreements and conflicts, which are explored below throughout my analysis, ACT organizers were not present at these demonstrations. I took part in other protests in the region against circuses, the fur industry, and vivisection, which also were not attended by ACT organizers because of similar reasons. I joined four other animal and other social justice demonstrations advertised by ACT, and where at least one ACT organizer was present.

My observations at these activist spaces all ended up being relevant and useful for this research. Participating in anti-Business or other animal activist demonstrations was helpful in allowing me to witness how ACT events were carried out in comparison to the ones organized by others. ACT organizers' public presence and social interactions (or mere absence) at various activist spheres guided me in formulating an accurate understanding of their ethics and politics, as well as their relationships with different members of the regional animal activist community (or the lack thereof).

At ACT demonstrations, I observed firsthand the physical setting, the social environment, formal and informal behaviours, planned and unplanned activities, and verbal and non-verbal social interactions amongst organizers and between organizers and attendees. I established an understanding of the size and demographic constitution

of ACT membership, the turnout at the demonstrations ACT organized, its activist practices, as well as the social and physical context of ACT's activism. By being present at demonstrations organized by other animal activists, I had the opportunity to make comparisons. At activist spaces where neither the organizers nor the attendees knew me as a researcher, I did not take field notes, but wrote about what stood out to me as being relevant to and useful for my research after getting home. I report my observations at these gatherings without identifying anyone, just like the ones I made during the car rides.

In addition to public demonstrations, I intended to make participant observations at ACT's organizational meetings as well. When I shared this interest with Bob in our initial conversation about this research, he said that ACT no longer held in-person meetings, but organized online through discussions in private Facebook groups instead. Emphasizing the *participant* in participant observation, I asked if he could add me to these Facebook groups and let me know if they do end up scheduling a physical meeting, so that I could get involved and do activism with ACT as well.

However, I could make little participant observation in ACT's organizational spheres. Although Bob did add me to a private ACT group on Facebook, it had been used to organize a past anti-Business demonstration, and I could not observe any activity there because it has been idle since then. I also attended an in-person organizational meeting after being invited by Bob, which was cut short because only three ACT organizers were present, and one had to leave quite early. I was on my way to the next meeting when Bob told me that it was cancelled because of ACT organizers' lack of availability, and I was not notified about any other meetings from then on. Participant observation at ACT's organizational meetings was intended to

provide data on the demographics of the organizational group, ACT's internal organizational dynamics, its leadership structure, the group's strategizing and recruitment discussions, decision-making processes, divisions of labour, and the interpersonal dynamics among group members. Although I could only witness one short organizational meeting of ACT, it was still instructive in developing some understanding of these. Moreover, the activists I interviewed who had attended ACT's organizational meetings earlier shared their own experiences and observations at those, which strengthened this part of the data. As noted, textual data also hinted at ACT's leadership structure and some internal dynamics. Participant observational data proved significant for this research. While often validating and supporting the interviewed activists' accounts, this method enriched the data through novel findings that did not come up in the interviews.

In-depth interviews.

Before I was ready to start conducting interviews, ACT announced its disbandment. When I attempted to contact Bob afterwards, asking about his and ACT's participation in my research, I did not hear back. A reminder after a few weeks did not yield any response either. Then I posted the letter of invitation in the private Facebook group I was added to, expecting to find ACT organizers willing to be interviewed there, but no one reached out. When Emily – the only other ACT organizer I was personally acquainted with – and I ran into each other at an unrelated occasion and talked about this research, she assured me that she would talk to other ACT organizers and get back to me. She never did. Because I did not want to harass ACT organizers with my persistence, I gave up the idea of interviewing them. A couple more sporadic conversations with Emily where she talked about scheduling an

interview with me, herself, and Bob did not bear fruit, because she did not follow up. I had already stopped asking.

I ended up interviewing ten animal activists who have been involved in the anti-Business campaign. I started my interviews by approaching one activist, whom I confidently expected to be a key informant, because they had been engaged in this activist context for more than two decades and are knowledgeable about the regional animal activist community. I asked their assistance in recruiting other participants, mainly animal activists who partook in activism against The Business, and experienced and observed ACT's activism. The snowball sampling had thus begun. I kept interviewing activists whom my participants recommended. When the suggested activist was not familiar to me, I asked the interviewee to contact that person, hand them a letter of invitation, briefly introduce this research and my interest in interviewing them, and ask if they would like to contact me or if they would agree to me contacting them. Other times, when a participant suggested that I interview an activist I was already acquainted with, I contacted them myself and asked if they would like to be interviewed as a part of this study.

Four activists whose participation was requested rejected giving an interview. One of these was a seasoned ACT organizer until they parted ways with the group, whose interview opportunity was promising, because they might have shared original insights on the conflicts between ACT and other activists for which participants usually blamed ACT. Including this activist, three out of the four who refused to participate said that they would not feel comfortable talking about ACT and the anti-Business campaign, and three expressed feeling like they did not have adequate observations or experiences to assist the research, two activists voicing both reasons. When they expressed a feeling of inadequacy, I reminded activists that simply having

a history of attending ACT's demonstrations is a sufficient criterion to be a participant in this research. However, when discomfort was voiced by the same activist (which often occurred right after), I did not insist any further.

Moreover, two participants voiced concerns after their interviews, informing me that they were considering withdrawing their consent. One was uncomfortable because they felt like they have talked behind the backs of their friends, and another was worried about the backlash they might get from the people they criticized in their interview. These interactions were challenging, because I did not want my fellow activists to feel obligated to maintain their participation. After reminding them their right to withdraw from the study, and reassuring that activists' emotional well-being should take priority over academic work, I sent them their interview transcripts for review, and offered to work with them in making sure that the information I use from their interview is presented in a way that they would feel comfortable with. One participant, after being indecisive for a while, chose to discontinue, while the other, satisfied with their interview transcript, ended up maintaining their participation. I hope and believe that both decisions were made free from feelings of any pressure. The frequency of activists' reluctance to speak about ACT, hesitation to continue their participation, and expressions of discomfort or worry is telling of the tensions present in the regional animal activist community. In a context where further harm on an already injured animal activist community was a common and reasonable concern, I tried my best to keep my word to participants in this thesis with utmost caution on what findings to disseminate and how to present those. What I had been aiming for with this project, after all, is to *reduce* harm against humans and animals.

All participants consented to their interviews being audiotaped at the locations they determined. Some chose being interviewed in their private residence, some at

mine, one at their office, and another at a quiet spot on a university campus.

Interviews lasted from approximately 1.5 to 4 hours, with an average slightly below 3 hours. Excluding the interview of the participant who dropped out, I ended up with nine interviews, which constituted almost 26 hours of voice records. I transcribed the records of completed interviews and got these transcripts approved by participants while continuing to recruit and interview new activists. Because I was simultaneously analyzing the data while continuing to gather more, patterns and themes that began to emerge guided the direction of relevant data collection.

Interview questions were open ended. I did not follow a rigid interview guide, and simply asked interviewees for more information on anything relevant they brought up. I asked participants about the animal activism against The Business, their role and involvement, and their experiences in or with different activist organizations. They also described ACT, including how they understood the objectives and guiding principles of the group, how those overlapped with or differed from other animal activist organizations, and how ACT put those in practice in terms of activist strategies. Participants shared their knowledge and perceptions of ACT's demographic composition, leadership, representation, recruitment strategies, decision making processes, and the divisions of labour within the group. ACT's intersectional politics was a central emphasis in the interviews. Participants were queried about their activism including but not limited to anti-speciesism, and how they thought gender, racialization, and class as social relations are relevant to animal activists. Alliances with other social justice movements, and how to improve the inclusivity of our animal activist communities to render them more welcoming to all were also discussed. Thanks to the rapport our activist solidarity created, interviews flowed like casual, everyday conversations. Themes started emerging after the first few interviews, some

of which influenced following interviews in the form of additional questions. For instance, the more participants brought up certain problematic patterns in the communication between ACT and other anti-Business activists, the more I investigated into certain ACT organizers' performance of a radical activist identity, which seemed to antagonize and alienate many other activists.

Data analysis

As recommended by the Grounded Theory methodology, the analysis started as soon as the first data were collected in this research process. After participants approved their interview transcripts, I used an inductive open coding strategy on these texts in order to formulate themes and subthemes – categories and concepts as referred to in the Grounded Theory literature (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Through multiple scans of these documents, themes emerged by being repeated or being consistently absent. For instance, the assertive leadership of Bob was expressed by most participants but was also apparent from the infrequent mention of any other ACT organizer in the interviews. Similarly, data demonstrated a continued absence of communication between ACT organizers and other activists, which inspired a central theme in ACT's organizing: silence.

The validity and reliability of findings were assessed through their application to the broader narrative of the studied context, which is also formulated by the data, and any claim that failed to be substantiated in this context was discarded from the final report. These included some speculations about ACT and one participant vaguely recalling an incident no others remembered. As noted in the discussion about research ethics, some data were not included in the analysis to ensure ethical and responsible research which protects the animal activists it studied. For instance, although I was attentive to conveying participants' tone in this thesis, especially on

the topic of aggressive conflicts between animal activists, I refrained from using some examples shared by the participants, because the themes were already established and unnecessary emphasis on the negative aspects on their organizing would have discredited the animal activists more than it assisted the development of good theory.

Research background, researcher reflexivity, and limitations

Before this research project had started, I had already heard a lot about ACT from fellow activists, and attended demonstrations organized by this group. Most of what I heard about ACT and Bob was negative, and it is necessary to note that those remarks have definitely shaped my initial view of them. Some of these negative comments might have affected my first impressions of ACT and Bob, and even our interactions, by functioning as self-fulfilling prophecies. For instance, because I had already been informed about some of the tensions present in the regional animal activist community, as well as ACT's frequent dismissal of other activists for various disagreements, I was quite nervous while approaching Bob to ask for research participation consent, and not very articulate during our conversation. Although my opinion about ACT and Bob changed for the better while developing a better understanding of their politics, some critiques by people in my activist community were always at the back of my mind, keeping me on my toes. Occasionally, I felt reluctant to share my opinions on some political issues on social media, because I was worried that possible ideological disagreements could jeopardize my rapport with ACT organizers, thus the quality of this research. Although to what extent my concern was well-founded is debatable, I did feel this anxiety until ACT disbanded, which mysteriously ended my correspondence with ACT organizers almost entirely.

Not being able to interview the most recent ACT organizers (including Bob), who might have illuminated different angles of some topics discussed with

participants, turned out to be the most serious limitation of this study. Being positioned apart from other anti-Business activists due to their different roles, ACT organizers also might have had novel insights, experiences, and perspectives to share. Because they were the ones who made the decisions which were externally observed by other activists, ACT organizers would probably have explained same situations differently. Similarly, this thesis could have benefited from more direct correspondence with the most recent ACT organizers, had I had more access to ACT's organizational sphere instead of merely one short, in-person meeting. Considering the relative absence of ACT organizers' voices in this research, it could be argued that the utilized snowball sampling technique constitutes another limitation, since it carries the risk of leading the researcher into a closed social circle of participants which is not necessarily representative of the studied population. Yet, the activist sample interviewed for this study was not homogenous except in terms of participants' racialized identities. Interviewed activists had different perspectives on animal activism and some were not even on speaking terms due to such disagreements.

Considering the animal activist population I studied, I might look like an insider. However, a more detailed examination of my social location would complicate that assumption. For instance, as a recent immigrant, making sense of the particularity of Canadian context was a challenge. Societal power relations, inequalities, forms of discrimination and oppression are omnipresent, yet operate in peculiar ways depending on historical, geographical, and cultural contexts. Thus, although I was familiar with the dynamics of racism, sexism, and many other oppressions as a social justice activist, figuring out how they play out in this region took some time. Moreover, prior to my immigration, I had no knowledge of Canada's

colonial past and present. I educated myself on these important sociological subjects, while conducting this research, which required an understanding of these aspects of social reality. Another limitation related to my recent immigrant status was that I lacked any prior firsthand observation of the anti-Business activist context, and thus, my knowledge relied on other activists' accounts, at least until I developed a sense of the setting. Acknowledging that I did not witness some important developments in this activist context and was unable to hear the other side(s) of the story, I attempt to convey my analysis in a humble tone.

Reporting findings and analysis

One of the most important lessons I learned from feminism in both my activism and academic career is to approach my judgments critically. Not only because of the unfounded senses of confidence and entitlement that accompany being a cisgender, heterosexual man in a society that unfairly privileges these identities, but also because I understand that knowledge is subjective and contextual, thus varies according to where, how, and by whom it was produced, I accept my analysis of a situation as merely an interpretation. Therefore, I tried to convey this thesis with humility, which was particularly necessary for two reasons. One, by making bold claims concerning an animal activist community which is already tense and already divided due to some of its members' bold judgments on politics and ethics, I would have only raised the risk of aggravating conflicts. Two, I knew that this document could not fulfill its purpose to become a resource for social justice activism if it sounded arrogant and thus off-putting to activists themselves. Therefore, although this thesis involves lengthy critiques of certain social justice activists' behaviour, it assumes that activists have made the discussed mistakes in good faith, never meaning to harm their fellow activist communities. The concluding chapter also includes a

self-reflexive discussion on some of the common honest mistakes activists tend to make. The next chapter is the first of two analytical chapters, which starts by outlining the anti-Business activist context and introducing ACT and other animal activists.

Chapter Four: *The Activist(s)*

In this chapter, animal activists protesting The Business are discussed including who they are and what they have experienced in this context. Part of this discussion concerns the gradual elevation of Bob, a co-founder of ACT, to a highly prominent activist figure in the region⁴, and how he and other ACT organizers came to be considered *the* activists (superior to others in various regards) both by themselves and some others. Hence the multi-purpose title that can be read in different ways.

This chapter aims to delineate the activism against The Business, comparatively position ACT and other animal activists within that context, and explore the reflections of ACT's politics on their chosen activist strategies, internal group dynamics, as well as their relationships to various figures such as other activists, journalists, politicians, and the general public. In order to fulfill this task, I begin by providing a brief history of the opposition against The Business, acknowledging the activist contributions within. Then I lay out a profile of the participants in this study, who all have contributed to this activist campaign for different periods of time and in various roles. This profile is followed by a more detailed description of ACT, including who they were, how their activism started, developed, and ended, what their activist approach was, and how it influenced their actions and the dynamics amongst activists in the region. The chapter concludes with a critical analysis of the rich data on the consequences of ACT's activist praxis, through the participants' accounts of their experiences and observations, my participant observations, and the investigation of textual data. These consequences concerning ACT, the rest of the regional animal activist community, the general

⁴ As noted, this research was conducted in Canada. The term *regional* refers to the city The Business is located in, as well as a handful of neighbouring cities where most of the anti-Business activists live.

public, and the animals we advocate for are all influential in understanding to what extent ACT managed to fulfill its potential to operate as a socially just activist organization, and how activism can be done differently for more successful results in this regard. The main argument of this chapter is that the radical activist identity ACT and Bob established and performed was exclusionary, and had gendered, racialized, and classed connotations, which clouded ACT's progressive politics and alienated many people, probably including some oppressed groups.

Activist opposition to The Business

As noted, The Business is a facility intended for humans' entertainment located in Canada. It houses many nonhuman animals from different species who are kept in captivity and forced to be spectacles for patrons while living in unsuitable surroundings and eating improper food. In addition to directly harming nonhuman animals, The Business has been blamed for causing environmental damage and abusing its labour force, giving the facility an infamous image in the region at least to some extent. However, unlike locals, most are unaware of any of these offences and buy into the dishonest corporate propaganda of The Business, allowing it to continue profiting from exploitation and misery that cross species boundaries.

Fortunately, unfair treatment of humans, nonhumans, and the earth by The Business is met with activist opposition. For decades, various animal advocacy and environmental organizations, differing in size, structure, focus, and approach, have protested against the facility. The Business responded to this opposition aggressively with the intent of silencing dissent, intimidating activists with the threats of or actual violence and litigation. While activists had to defend themselves for their commitment to justice, the real offenders who hurt humans, nonhumans, and the environment were not prosecuted, let alone sanctioned.

This pressure failed to stop the activist struggle. In fact, despite politically regressive lawsuits by The Business, some members of a seasoned *regional* animal activist organization (REG) paired with new activists and founded ACT, an organization particularly dedicated to end animal suffering at The Business. The following year, some animal abuse at The Business made the news when a few workers came out as whistleblowers. Their verification of the claims of animal mistreatment that activists had been making for years galvanized the opposition to The Business, multiplying the numbers at the protests.

The Business did not cease its efforts to silence its opposition and, in fact, responded to this development by becoming even more aggressive and litigious. Currently, although ACT is no longer active (which is discussed below), opposition to The Business is alive thanks to the involvement of other animal activist organizations and individuals. Nine activists who have invested labour in this political campaign agreed to share their experiences and observations for this research. The following section provides a profile of these participants, including demographic information and their approaches to as well as their histories of activism.

Participant profile

Participants in this study became involved in the activist opposition against The Business at different times. Two veterans in the activist sample have both been participating in this struggle for over twenty years. Three others have been involved for six to seven years, while four have been active for two to four years. The involvement of five participants precede ACT's formulation; therefore, they had the opportunity to witness the lifespan of this organization in its entirety.

Of course, witnessing was not all they did. All nine participants had different degrees of involvement with ACT. While Sarah's participation was limited to

regularly attending demonstrations organized by ACT, Adam used to have the responsibility of doing the group's social media work, Shane was an organizer for years, and Steph could not help but refer to ACT as “we” a few times before correcting herself. Except Sarah, all participants have been to organizational meetings of this activist group.⁵ Yet, no participant was still an ACT organizer by the time it disbanded, four years after its formation.

Before exploring the participants' separations from ACT in depth in the next chapter, which are of vital importance for this thesis, it is useful to note here that Shane stands out in the sample in terms of his status in relation to this organization. Although he too had left ACT, unlike other participants, he described his departure from the group as a relatively amiable one, allowing him and the remaining organizers to still be on good terms. Consequently, although he shared many of the critiques directed at ACT by some other participants – whose separations from the group were much more dramatic – his view of this organization was quite favourable. By consistently referring to ACT as “we,” Shane allowed me a sense of what interviews with most recent ACT organizers might have looked like, had they responded to my recruitment efforts following the group consent they gave earlier.

In addition to how they are positioned in reference to ACT, participants varied in terms of demographic categories. Six of the nine participants identified as women, which is in line with what the literature (Gaarder, 2011; Luke, 2007) suggests about contemporary animal activist populations in North America. Another corroboration of

⁵ ACT was one of many “working groups” under a regional animal activist umbrella organization (Umbrella). Umbrella disbanded before ACT did, and for a while, ACT remained the only working group that survived that break. Some meetings participants referred to in their interviews were Umbrella meetings. Yet, all participants agree that it would be more than fair to draw conclusions about ACT from one's experiences and observations at Umbrella meetings, mostly because both organizations were composed of and run by the same activists. Moreover, one participant, Connor, confidently identifies as a former ACT member although the meetings he had attended were exclusively of Umbrella instead of ACT.

this literature (Harper, 2011b; Nocella, 2012) is the fact that all participants are white. Although I attempted to recruit two activists of colour, whose insights could have aided this research immensely, I could not secure an interview from either which I have permission to use, for both expressed not feeling comfortable talking about ACT due to interpersonal conflicts they endured in this group and which had an emotional toll on them. Those two were the only racialized activists I and my participants could identify as former ACT organizers or prominent members of the group. The fact that both activists of colour deeply involved in ACT expressed discomfort with talking about this organization, I believe, constitutes a finding by itself, hinting that the progressive politics of the group failed in making the experiences of racialized activists positive. How and why this might have ended up being the case is explored further below.

Educational level in the sample was high. The least formally educated participant had finished high school; three had some post-secondary education, while one had a bachelor's degree and four others had master's degrees. A high educational level amongst animal activists is no surprise considering the earlier body of research (Gaarder, 2011; Galvin & Herzog, 1992; Guither, 1998; Jamison & Lunch, 1992; Shapiro, 1994). The average age of the participants was 37, with four activists in their mid-twenties, three in late thirties or early forties, and two older than 55. This finding resonates with what the literature suggests about animal activists in North America too. Plous (1991), and Jamison and Lunch (1992) report that the average participant in their samples was in their 30s, and Guither (1998) argues that the typical animal activist is middle-aged. Although the perceived youth of ACT organizers was often brought up by interviewees, according to my participant observations, ACT had older organizers too. I believe that, had all of the most recent ACT organizers been

interviewed, the average age of participants might have dropped slightly, but not drastically. I assume that the reason why ACT organizers seemed particularly young to some other animal activists in the region was their more visible roles in ACT's organizing compared to relatively older activists. This topic of age is revisited and further discussed throughout this thesis.

Five participants identified in the middle class, of which three emphasized being not even quite there financially. Only one participant put the adjective *comfortable* before middle class, which marked the highest self-identified class position. Among the other four, three identified in the working class and one described their status as poor. Although, due to my observations, I believe that some of these self-assessments are understatements at least to some degree, I have not encountered proof to claim that animal activists are an affluent group on average (both in and out of this sample). Some animal activist participants of this study certainly possess some financial privilege, manifested by ownership of a house for instance, but the opposite seems more common as many activists are students in debt, working minimum-wage jobs to get by, if not unemployed. Contrary to the contested but common assumption in the literature that animal activists in the Global North occupy a higher than average class position (Gaarder, 2011; Glasser, 2011a; Guither, 1998; Lowe & Ginsberg, 2002; Shapiro, 1994), my observation (in and out of this research) is that animal activists – at least grassroots ones – have less financial privilege than the average citizen but more awareness of the privileges they possess, since they tend to have more progressive views on and a deeper grasp of social inequalities.

This discrepancy between what academic literature suggests and what is experienced by an on-the-ground activist may partially be the result of

neoliberalization of higher education, through which activists still attain cultural capital, knowledge, and critical thinking skills that help analyze both speciesism and one's own social location, but no longer the economic capital that leads to upward mobility and a prosperous life. Another possible explanation is the underrepresentation of grassroots animal activists in the scholarly literature (Aaltola, 2011; Broad, 2013). Data collected about NGOized animal advocacy organizations and their paid employees are often generalized to animal activism as a whole, while dumpster-diving veganarchists are rarely afforded any academic curiosity.

Discussions over demographics hinted at participants' political views. For instance, out of the two participants who identified as members of the working class, one noted that they are still privileged due to other societal factors, and the other felt the need to mention that they have never been homeless, acknowledging that many people have it worse. Similarly, one participant said that, although they do not necessarily identify as a man, they certainly have male privilege. Another said they were white, “unfortunately,” signaling their discomfort with the undeserved privilege bestowed upon them in a system of racial inequalities.

Of course, not everyone shared such an informed, meticulous, and self-reflexive understanding of politics. For instance, unlike some participants who recognized the subtle but profound political connotations of omnipresent societal power dynamics, Jane described politics as “[talking about] whether NDP should be elected,” and found it pointless in the context of animal activism. Like many mainstream animal activists, Jane thought that talking about other social issues “that have nothing to do with animal issues” according to her and which she described as “spokes in the wheel,” would be “going on tangents” which “dilutes” animal activism and results in our message getting “watered down.” When I asked if she was ever

involved in any other activist movement, she said: “No. No. I became right involved in animal rights and never *deviated*” [Emphasis added]. She was critical of prioritizing other social justice issues over the liberation of animals. Yet, she did not sound like she necessarily had a problem with a hierarchy of priorities, as long as nonhumans are at the top: “[S]omebody has to make a choice there, who comes or what comes first.”

Jane's placement of her preferred justice cause above all others is an activist disease not endemic to animal advocacy but common in most social justice circles (Best, 2009; Sorenson, 2011). In fact, most often it is speciesism that is ignored, considered redundant or peripheral, and actively reinforced by activists in other social justice movements who view animal advocacy as a mere a fad or a distraction, thus sideline, disregard, trivialize, even mock our messages (Best, 2009; Sorenson, 2011). Unsurprisingly, the inconsistency or hypocrisy of supposed proponents of justice, freedom, equity and peace ignoring or failing to grasp the significance of nonhuman suffering and exploitation receives very little critique in our profoundly speciesist culture.

Although all participants in this study challenge this speciesist culture, Adam's remarks on human oppressions such as sexism and racism were significantly less informed and more superficial than on speciesism. When asked how he thinks gender, racialization, or class as social relations relate to animal activism, he said he does not think they are related at all. He perceived the questions as inquiries about who should be allowed in animal activist spaces, and unsurprisingly argued that everyone should, regardless of their identities. Although he did include that “obviously, everybody who is [at the demonstrations] should be treated with respect and dignity and, uh, equality,” he admitted not being well-versed on what might jeopardize these for an

oppressed individual, such as hypervisibility explained by Harper (2011b) in Chapter Two.

Similarly, Adam thought that “The Business has nothing to do with Aboriginal rights.” In fact, it does. In the context of North America, no social justice issue can be comprehensively analyzed in isolation from the colonial past and present of this territory. Furthermore, animal liberation and decolonization (both in theory and activist praxis) are incomplete without each other, because, as well as First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, nonhumans are colonial subjects who have increasingly been subjected to institutionalized cruelty and exploitation through the settler-colonial expansion, and places of concentrated animal abuse such as The Business or any slaughterhouse are colonial spaces appropriated through settler expansion (Belcourt, 2015). Hence, Belcourt (2015) does not only criticize most anti-colonialists for not recognizing these facts, but also critiques most CAS scholars and animal activists for failing to grasp the centrality of colonization and colonialism within the societal dynamics of contemporary North America, and for addressing those only in an additive manner amongst other social justice causes, if at all. However, in addition to the importance of recognizing the fundamental roles of colonization and colonialism in weaving the very fabric of our societies, decolonization also offers a lot to animal advocacy, since it is

not only beneficial to animals because it demands the dismantling of all settler-colonial infrastructures (including those that produce and progress speciesism), but would also require a re-signification of animal subjects and human-animal relations through the non-speciesist and interdependent models of animality envisioned in Indigenous cosmologies (Belcourt, 2015, p. 10).

Of course, merging decolonization and animal advocacy in an intersectional social justice movement would require reversing “the normalization of speciesism within Indigenous communities” (Belcourt, 2015, p. 9) and for animal advocates to unlearn the racism and colonialism we all have been socialized into. Difficult as it sounds, anti-colonialists and anti-speciesists can cultivate an incredibly promising solidarity through self-education and respectful communication. When more animal activists recognize the animal and earth advocacy aspects of Indigenous resistance (such as oil pipeline blockades), and when more anti-colonialists acknowledge that the speciesist institutions protested by animal advocates are settler colonial entities which maintain the abuse of human and nonhuman animals as well as the land itself, a stronger and more subversive movement will likely blossom, which will certainly be good news for all animals and the earth, and bad news for colonialist states and capitalist corporations. Hence, although this vision is admittedly idealistic, there is a profound connection between The Business and “Aboriginal rights,” whose recognition will strengthen and advance both anti-colonialist and anti-speciesist efforts (See also Kymlicka & Donaldson, 2015).

With the knowledge of the virtues of having an informed, progressive, and intersectional approach, and of a number of conflicts between my participants and ACT organizers due to ideological disagreements, I found it essential to explore my participants' political views and their positions on intersectionality. Within the framework of this research, an intersectional social justice activist is aware of and does continuous self-education on the intricacy of social power dynamics, parallels between and intersections of oppressive ideologies, structures, propaganda, and actions, and the experiences of different forms of oppression. Although they might embrace some justice causes more than others and invest more in those, they would

refuse to rank these in importance, and aim for total liberation opposing all oppression. They would also be engaged in ongoing self-reflection to become always increasingly aware of their unearned power and privileges due to their social location and some of their identity markers, and actively strive to ensure that they neither unfairly benefit from those (to the possible extent) nor allow those to hinder the responsibility of their activism by hurting marginalized human and nonhuman animals. Consequently, an intersectional activist's work would be anti-oppressive not only for the group they directly advocate for but also all others.

The significance of the aforementioned approach and its consequence in praxis for animal advocates has been eloquently explained by Jones (2012) who, in a presentation at an animal rights conference, says

We're trying to do something about the subordination of the animals but [it] exists within this whole system (...) where the different parts support each other, and if we're colluding with that system at the same time as we're trying to jiggle this one piece of it free, it's just not going to work. (...) We're aiming to totally overturn the whole basis of the economy. I think we need more people. Paying attention to these things will help us get more people. Not *get* more people, to *be* more people. Also, advocacy, whether it's for veganism or against some form of animal abuse, is always much more effective when it's done by people within a particular community. We need to be in every community. (...) The mainstream is not the majority. (...) Add up all the people outside mainstream, *that's* the majority. So, when we target [only white, middle-class citizens of the Global North with] our message, we're doing maybe the exact opposite of what we need to do. So (...) if we do this [confront and condemn our racial, gender, class or any other privileges, renounce them

to the possible extent and use them appropriately to assist the underprivileged by inviting them to speak in environments they are silenced for instance] (...), we *actually* have a chance of doing what we're setting out to do.

I agree with Jones that this approach is paramount for animal activists both because it will aid us in building a comprehensive social justice movement that is more likely to succeed in eradicating the injustices on this world, and simply because every oppression matters and it is wrong to be complicit in any.

While inquiring about participants' political approaches with these ideas in mind, I found out that Adam had a pragmatic understanding of intersectionality; that is, he was supportive of the approach only as long as it brings more people into the animal activist movement. He did not embody a commitment to invest activist energy in challenging human oppressions and injustices, because he did not see them complementary to let alone necessary for his goal, animal liberation. Yet, I would argue that he carries seeds of intersectionality. Pointing out how his views have developed and the scope of his political awareness has widened throughout his activist involvement, he said: "When I started all this, I was anti-Business. Now I'm anti-a lot of things. (...) I saw [that there] was a pattern of systematic abuse of not only animals, but also people, of the legal system, of governments, of... of... of the environment." The fact that he praised ACT for highlighting the plight of the human victims of The Business, and his belief that the state of the local economy should be given careful consideration while protesting a facility that provides jobs, however lousy they might be, are both evidence of his potential in gradually embracing an intersectional approach. Acknowledging the shortcomings in his current political awareness, Adam humbly admitted that there was still a lot he had to learn, as we all do but often find difficult to recognize and admit. A similar humility was present in Jane's attitude as

well. Although she did not necessarily think of her “narrow focus” as a problem, Jane recognized that that her analyses might be limited for this reason. Just like Adam, she sounded like she was open to be proven wrong about some of her opinions. Like Jane, Adam had no history of involvement in any social justice cause except animal activism. Although involvement in multiple social justice causes is not a necessity to be an intersectional activist, my experience in and out of this research suggests that intersectional activists are usually more likely to have a more diverse activist portfolio.

Another participant who had not done activism other than for the liberation of nonhuman animals is Sarah. After requiring a definition of the term, she voiced support for an intersectional approach. Yet, she shared the pragmatic understanding of this paradigm present in Adam's accounts, and valued an intersectional approach only if it expands and strengthens animal advocacy. Sarah's euphemistic description of being racist or otherwise discriminatory as “doing something stupid” and “crazy behaviour” (an unfortunately ableist term), does not capture the severity of such conduct and its harmful consequences. Although she argued that she never witnessed anyone perform such oppressive behaviour at anti-Business or other animal activist protests, she did not sound perceptive enough to notice subtle and insidious forms of oppression and discrimination. In Sarah's words, ACT was striving to be “politically correct,” a term laden with conservative meanings in the current sociopolitical context. Her claim that there was “too much focusing on people issues” in the contemporary animal activist movement also reflected her shortcomings of a well-informed, progressive, intersectional politics as described above.

Except these three participants, who all seem to be open to dialogue and eventually adopting an intersectional approach, every activist in the sample had been

engaged in activist causes other than animal advocacy, and claimed that they embodied an intersectional perspective. Although disagreements abound regarding the meaning of intersectionality and what it should look like in activist praxis, this finding which confirms that most animal activists extend their consideration beyond nonhumans (Aaltola, 2011; Broad, 2013; Nibert, 1994; Shapiro, 1994) is uplifting. The following section explores ACT, an organization with a wide social justice framework, just like these six participants.

ACT

This section describes ACT, drawing on participants' interviews. As noted, ACT was founded while the animal activist opposition to The Business was having a hard time under physical and legal intimidation. Constituted predominantly by young, energetic activists who were not scared of litigation, ACT invigorated the activism against The Business and started mobilizing significant numbers at protests with the help of the negative publicity this facility was already getting in the media. Even after a co-founder, Bob, was also hit by a lawsuit from The Business, ACT carried on their "pressure campaign" against this facility as they called it. Their activist repertoire included organizing protests in front of The Business, various marches, even home demonstrations against the owner of the facility. One of ACT's former organizers, Shane, describes ACT this way: "In terms of our strategies and our tactics, one of the things that I was really (...) proud of [is that] there was also a firmness in it."

In addition to that firmness which other participants described with words such as *radical* or *militant*, ACT had many more qualities. The activists who founded and led ACT also embraced an intersectional politics. Steph and Adam noted that ACT did not limit its activism to advocating for the nonhuman animals being exploited by The Business, but also raised awareness for the humans harmed by this facility and its

owner, such as people who were evicted from an area purchased by this corporation in an unfair and cruel manner. Environmental concerns were included in ACT's agenda too. Having progressive politics in terms of gender, race, class, colonialism, immigration, environment, and so forth, ACT organizers were active in various social justice causes, attended and promoted different demonstrations and campaigns. Connor, for instance, remembers writing letters to prisoners with them, a reflection of their prison abolition stance. Similarly, Kate recalls that ACT organizers contributed to the organizing of an anti-Canada Day event to challenge nationalism and colonialism. Blaire also mentioned a campaign promoted by them to destigmatize mental health issues. ACT organizers supported many marginalized and impoverished groups in some way, including the homeless, the LGBTQIA+, migrant workers and other immigrants, and the First Nations, Métis. and Inuit peoples. Their politics were internationalist and entailed supporting Palestinians or any other population suffering under oppression overseas.

This wide understanding of social justice extends to another very prominent principle of ACT: community-building. To put this principle into practice, they reached out to different social movements and political organizations to partner with them, share resources, build coalitions, and weave solidarities. For instance, Steph told the inspiring story of ACT partnering with a local chapter of a union, which resulted in the union chapter going vegan in their food purchasing policy, and ACT vowing to only sell merchandise produced by unionized labour. Union flags were visible at ACT demonstrations. ACT and REG were also sharing resources and supporting each other.

In addition to their external relationships, ACT's social justice approach reflected on the organization itself and how it operated. In line with anarchism, which

informed most ACT organizers' politics if not all, their group was structured to be non-hierarchical. According to Rebecca, ACT co-founders who used to work under REG were critical of this group because they found it hierarchical. Hence, they envisioned a leaderless organization in which everyone had equal say. ACT organizers used various methods to achieve this goal. For instance, organizational meetings had rotating facilitators, a different person moderating each meeting, plus different people taking minutes and keeping track of time, a measure to prevent individual activists from being accorded too much power. Another measure to avoid power imbalance among members was a commitment to support everyone to develop their weaker skills. The principle was to encourage every activist to improve themselves in activist tasks they are or feel inadequate at, such as public speaking, so that everyone would be well-equipped to represent or speak on behalf of the group if needed, and inequalities that may arise from fulfillment of different roles could be averted.

In addition to these measures to avoid jeopardizing group democracy by preventing inequalities from developing within the organization, ACT presented itself as a consensus-based group in which decisions are made only with the consent of all organizers present at meetings. Shane noted that, in order to create this organizational culture, ACT facilitated consensus trainings among organizers that entailed productive and respectful ways of communication. Of course, a respectful environment needs to be free from oppression as much as possible. Thus, ACT held anti-oppression trainings (no details were provided about the nature of these) and identified as an anti-oppressive organization. This was intended to eliminate discriminatory discourses within the group such as sexism, racism, colonialism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, ableism, and the like. Principles named as

“community agreements” arose from discussions regarding anti-oppression.

According to Shane, more vocal people taking a step back and allowing quieter people more space for self-expression, using an accessible language, and not talking negatively about anyone who was not present were a few of these community agreements.

Efforts similar to those to make meetings equitable were also put forward in the organization of demonstrations. One goal of ACT organizers was to ensure that anyone who wanted to attend them could do so. Thus, in order to make the demonstrations in front of The Business more accessible for people who do not have the means to drive, ACT organized buses that picked them up from neighbouring cities. Although Steph recorded that this practice had to be stopped due to difficulty in covering the costs, their effort deserves praise. ACT organizers also organized carpools and encouraged attendees to do so as well. Kate noted that accessibility was also taken into consideration by ACT organizers while scheduling demonstrations. According to her, except some symbolic and meaningful dates, protests were planned with consideration of regular work hours and other factors that might affect the availability of possible attendees. Moreover, Shane acknowledged that ACT advertised its demonstrations as “family-friendly,” where people were encouraged to come with their children. This measure probably made the protests more accessible to both women and impoverished people who do not have the opportunity to pass the responsibility of looking after their child(ren) to someone else. Steph added that, although ACT mainly used social media to promote its activism, they also put up posters which allowed people who do not have access to the internet to find out about them and get involved.

ACT's efforts were not limited to getting people to demonstrations but included providing a positive experience once they were there, which required greeting them with a welcoming and inclusive environment. Steph argued that, part of maintaining such a space was accomplished by ACT organizers through their own image and performances at protests. According to her, thanks to their modest clothing and accessible language, ACT organizers were giving an unthreatening and relatable impression, which might have helped impoverished and less formally educated people feel more comfortable at ACT demonstrations. However, this behaviour is not without critique. According to Jacqueline Kennelly (2009b), the (sometimes unintentional) enactment of a working-class performance is common in youth activist subcultures in Canada which are predominantly populated with activists coming from middle-class backgrounds. As noted, although there is not much evidence to suggest that the average animal activist – both in and out of this sample – is affluent, two participants made remarks regarding their perceived privilege of ACT organizers. Acknowledging the fact that I did not have any means to verify their or any other assertions regarding ACT organizers' demographics, I believe Adam's and Rebecca's comments are nevertheless interesting and valuable. Adam claimed that “[ACT organizers] make it seem like they're these social justice warriors but they come from privilege. (...) they go home to their white-bread families at the end of the day.” Rebecca also pointed out that, despite his populist performance, Bob was actually very well educated, which brings about significant sociocultural capital. Kennelly (2009b) believes that underperformances of class by activists who possess socioeconomic privilege – which helps them acquire significant subcultural capital – might be alienating for those who do not share the same academic or professional opportunities and the consequent cultural capital.

Nevertheless, regardless of their alleged socioeconomic and cultural capital, ACT organizers took measures to accommodate underprivileged attendees of protests, such as providing sign making material like Bristol boards and markers. This way, anyone who did not have the time or resources to make a sign before could make one at the demonstration. Ready-made signs were also available for anyone to use. These signs had a second function too. Sometimes people showed up at protests with signs that others found offensive or disrespectful, such as signs that compared nonhumans' suffering to a human suffering through the usage of slavery or Holocaust analogies. When this happened, the person with the politically questionable sign was approached by an ACT organizer who offered them an explanation of the controversy surrounding the topic and another sign to replace theirs.

In addition to filtering out inappropriate or controversial content on signage, ACT strove to keep their activism free from any kind of discriminatory language through another means. According to Steph, whenever ACT invited performers to be a part of a demonstration, it was made sure that their lyrics were free of sexist, racist, homophobic or any other kinds of offensive language. Being cognizant of other possible factors that might jeopardize the ideal of creating a safe(r) space for activism, ACT organizers also did not allow anyone to photograph protestors without their consent. ACT also amplified children's voices, and this disempowered group particularly manipulated and exploited by the speciesist entertainment industry inspired the anti-Business campaign when ACT encouraged their activist participation and input, including supporting and promoting a campaign started by a child activist. Having all these political sensitivities made ACT not only a remarkable milestone in the history of activism against The Business, but also a unique component of the

regional animal activist community. Steph argues that “ACT [did] definitely bring that critical eye to the local movement.”

All participants have praised ACT for various reasons and to different degrees. Blaire claimed that “The Business felt the heat after [ACT was] formed.” ACT’s presence “excited people” and was “a push for activism” in the region, according to Rebecca. Sarah applauded their steady activist presence, and Steph noted that they put “consistent pressure on The Business (...) not allowing the public to forget” about its abuses. Adam appreciated that ACT did a decent job in highlighting the plight of the human as well as nonhuman victims of The Business. Blaire agreed: “They truly cared about the working class.” “They cost The Business a lot of money!” exclaimed Steph, emphasizing the loss of profit due to decreased popularity and the expenses of efforts to silence activists and to improve the image of the facility via a public relations campaign. However, participants in this study were critical of ACT too. The rest of this chapter explores their critiques. Just like Starr’s (2004, p. 120) examination of the critiques of racism directed at the anti-globalization movement in North America, because “there has been very little response” from the criticized ACT organizers, the narrative about ACT – including the positive and the negative – fell short of becoming a dialogue.

Critiques

Despite many positive comments they made about ACT, interviewed activists were also critical of this group in many ways. It can be argued that Steph reflected a shared feeling in the activist sample when she said: “I would give ACT a mixed review.” In fact, except Shane, it seemed like the participants’ overall assessments of ACT were skewed towards the negative. Their critiques were sometimes about ACT not doing enough for the activist opposition to The Business, and other times either

about the inconsistency they perceived between ACT's theory and practice or how they thought certain actions of the group were actually counterproductive on the path towards animal liberation. Most participants argued that there were contradictions in how ACT organizers put their political principles into activist practice; hence, according to them, ACT's self-manufactured image was somewhat deceiving. "It is not intellectually acceptable to merely accept the self-definition of an organization offered by its leadership without question" (Brulle & Essoka, 2005, p. 215) after all.

Participants' critiques of ACT fall under four major categories that organize this section. The first theme is the participants' disapproval of the choices ACT organizers made in line with their radical philosophy, such as refraining from the mainstream media and state bureaucracy, since these decisions allegedly had negative consequences for the anti-Business campaign. Critiques regarding ACT organizers' perceived anger and aggression are also explored in relation to their radical identity. Secondly, the disparities participants identified between ACT's politics and activist practice are discussed. These include challenges to ACT's claims of being intersectional and anti-oppressive (towards both human and nonhuman animals). The third section explores the most frequently brought up and most vehemently discussed inconsistency of ACT: the group's leadership. Most participants believed that ACT was quite hierarchical and considered it a "one-man" organization, almost completely run by Bob. The fourth and final major critique concerns the "perfect activist" image Bob and ACT established in the region, which had detrimental consequences for other activists who fell short of this ideal and for anti-Business activism.

Radicalism and aggression.

As noted, participants frequently described ACT as radical, and militant. According to my observations, ACT was not only attributed this characteristic by

others; ACT organizers proudly embraced a radical activist identity. James Jasper (as cited in Munro, 2005b, p. 83) notes that, activist organizations choose strategies that match their group identities. Because ideological radicalism was one of the most central defining features of ACT, it shaped the group's activism to a significant degree. Simply, ACT was a radical animal activist organization founded by and made up of radical activists. Their activist practices certainly reflected this fact.

For instance, critical of mainstream and corporate media, ACT organizers were often at odds with journalists working for these and refused to talk to them, including some local reporters. According to Blaire, ACT organizers were rightfully hesitant in providing these journalists with information and credibility, because it was already a given that animal activists were going to be covered in these media outlets in an unfavourable light. Although Blaire claimed that this was a lesson learned from past experiences, according to Rebecca, ACT started getting negative media publicity, if any, only after Bob got into quarrels with journalists on social media. Jane and Adam challenged the opinion that negative media coverage was inevitable for animal activists. In fact, they claimed that they had good relationships with journalists and therefore got good coverage of their activism. Aaltola (2011, p. 401) agrees that "[t]he media are biased but not impenetrable."

Regardless of the reason why ACT could not maintain a good relationship with the media, unpleasant consequences of this situation were apparent. Without the media publicity, it was harder for them to reach their audience. According to Rebecca and Steph, this was the main reason for ACT to start using social media primarily and circulating their own content. Nevertheless, without the mainstream media coverage, ACT could only be found by people who already deliberately looked for them. This fact certainly limited their capacity for outreach. Adam believed that ACT failed to

overcome this hurdle and criticized its organizers for locking themselves up in a social media circle filled with like-minded individuals who already agreed with them. Adam was stressing the importance of “reach[ing] outside the bubble,” which is done best through mainstream media. In her discussion of grassroots animal activists in the UK, Aaltola (2011) argues that, by completely refraining from interacting with the conventional media, “[this grassroots] movement has, to a certain extent, distanced itself from a dialogue with the society” (p. 404), and “has displayed an explicit disregard of public opinion” (p. 401). Some participants in this study would agree that her arguments apply to ACT too. Although it is understandable for vegans and animal advocates to struggle in our interactions with the speciesist members of our societies because of their frequent indifferent, disrespectful, and cruel behaviours towards nonhuman animals and us, their advocates (Aaltola, 2011; Boyacıoğlu, 2016; Greenebaum, 2012a; Twine, 2014), segregating animal advocacy is antithetical to our goals of social change.

In addition to their discord with the media, ACT was also reluctant to work with politicians or bureaucrats for social change. A grassroots organization informed by anarchist philosophies, they did not believe in bourgeois democracy. Although ACT urged its followers to write to and put pressure on government officials, its own engagement with them did not go much further than protesting at public meetings or around their offices. In fact, Adam said that his separation from ACT was because he disagreed with this attitude of ACT and took initiative to start dialogues with politicians. Apparently, ACT organizers did not want to continue working together with Adam after this disagreement, and being disillusioned with the group himself, neither did he. Adam criticized ACT organizers for not utilizing all available avenues for anti-Business activism, but limiting their opposition to only organizing public

protests. “You need to oppose The Business on every fucking front,” he said, emphasizing the importance of talking to as many people as possible whether they are tourists, students, or lawmakers. This is why Steph and Adam handed out anti-Business leaflets regularly.⁶ Although ACT occasionally gave talks or presentations, or tabled at activist events, sometimes at schools, most participants thought that these efforts were insufficient and that the group's activism was too demo-oriented.

It can be argued that a strong preference for demonstrations over less obtrusive activist tactics is a masculine characteristic, drawing on experiences and observations of women animal activists who argue that men prefer “dramatic stuff” over the “nitty-gritty” (Gaarder, 2011, p. 97). Based on her participant observations in the US alterglobalization movement, Amory Starr (2006, p. 380) claims that white activists favour large protests too, because these help them compensate for the support they usually lose in their families due to their politics, in contrast to people of colour whose political activity is often strongly tied to their families and communities. Another analytical angle is offered by Starr (2004, p. 132), who posits that social justice activists in North America “remained obsessed with mass mobilizations” after the 1999 World Trade Organization protests in Seattle.

Making a distinction between two different understandings of the term radical would be useful here. Although radicalism means challenging the roots of a problem and envisioning a fundamental, systemic change, which explains disbelief in corporate media and politicians, it is also commonly associated with an angry, unreasonable, even violent activist image in the general public (Kennelly, 2011, p. 1-

⁶ According to Steph, Bob claimed that any anti-Business leafleting would affect his lawsuit negatively, even when it is not done by him personally. This would probably be ACT organizers' explanation for not leafleting. Steph and Adam, however, with legal counselling, believed that this was a false interpretation of the lawsuit and continued to hand out anti-Business leaflets. Although none of their efforts was used against Bob in court to my and their knowledge, this disagreement certainly added tension to the relationship between these activists.

2), mostly because of radical activists' negative representation in conformist state and corporate propaganda including the mainstream media and the educational system. These two understandings of radicalism were both present in participants' accounts. Rebecca, for instance, described ACT as *loud* and *confrontational*; and although she specified that she does not attach any negative connotations to these terms, many people do, and this is how radicalism is often perceived by the average citizen. Although there is nothing odd with radicals making uncontentious tactical choices for a friendly activism, ACT's radical image and activist performance did not challenge the negative stereotype. Hence, critiques regarding actual outcomes of ideological radicalism and consequences of an angry and confrontational activism were intermingled in the interviews.

Adam, for instance, did not only disapprove of ACT's ideological avoidance of legal politics for limiting possible avenues for animal advocacy, but also criticized the harshness of ACT's messages for impeding the relatability and thus success of animal activists. A concrete example was that, although ACT's goal was to end animal suffering at The Business so the continued operation of the facility would be acceptable as long as it stops profiting from animal abuse, ACT used slogans and chants such as "Shut it down!" in their campaign. Adam argued that this was counterproductive, considering that this facility was located in an economically depressed area. According to him, worried that the region would lose even more jobs if The Business closed down, local residents were not sympathetic to activists, because of the harshness of ACT's messages. Kate agreed that a significant portion of locals did not have positive feelings towards the activists and emphasized the importance of doing outreach to this population. Although ACT published an open letter to residents, despite its impressive content in terms of commitment to

intersectionality and a broad spectrum of social justice, it read like a unidirectional manifesto rather than a dialogue starter which welcomes and encourages their input.⁷

In addition to not making some necessary engagements, ACT was also criticized for the aggression present in some engagements between the activists and the patrons of The Business. Confrontation is a basic element of activism, and of course not necessarily problematic. However, Connor observed the “guilting and shunning” of The Business patrons and felt the need to emphasize that this behaviour was not corrected. His critique went beyond the usual argument that activist anger is off-putting and counterproductive (Dillard, 2002). He said: “[C]ertain things were, um, yelled out at... at... entire families with children present. Some things weren’t appropriate.” In fact, completely coincidentally, a friend of mine provided anecdotal evidence parallel to Connor's concern. She told me that she was “ignorant” (her word) when she moved into the region, and she took her children to The Business. She said that the protestors were shouting “What if someone took you away from your family and you couldn't see them again?” One of her children is adopted, and this incident occurred shortly after this fact was shared with him, which was already a difficult time for the family. My friend recalled the experience as hurtful and described the protestors as inconsiderate.

Shane, the second participant troubled by the aggression towards patrons, felt the need to say that such inconsiderate comments were not made by activists in ACT, at least not in the core organizing group. Yet, throughout my participant observations, I have witnessed a few instances of The Business patrons being aggressively taunted by ACT organizers too. Moreover, one participant mentioned some anti-Business activists (including themselves and some ACT organizers) calling an employee of this

⁷ As explained in Chapter Three, in order to protect the identities of the activists studied for this research, I cannot quote this document because it can be traced online.

facility with a nickname that mockingly referred to their physical disability.

Regardless of who actually perpetrated such offences, it was ACT organizers' responsibility to maintain the accountability of the activist space, and it would be fair to say that they failed at this task at least to some extent.

Apart from aggressive confrontations and hurtful comments, ACT organizers' approach to patrons were still questionable at times. At the many demonstrations I attended, whether these were against the animal abuse at The Business or elsewhere, I was occasionally troubled by the attitude of ACT organizers towards protest targets. Although it never came up in the interviews, ageism appeared to be a social issue ACT organizers needed to educate themselves on. While the exploitation of animals for the purpose of human entertainment was being protested, one often heard remarks from ACT organizers such as "You guys look way too old for this place!" or "Older people without kids? What are you going to do here?" Albeit quietly, sometimes such comments were made about attendees of demonstrations and other activists too. For instance, at one demonstration while a protestor with a whistle was engaging with the patrons in an unproblematic but unusual way, Bob and Ashlyn, another prominent ACT organizer, were giggling and saying "That's how 40-year-old men behave when they come to our demos," signaling that they did not think of the activist space as multigenerational. Moreover, once when I asked Bob about some conflicts ACT had with other members of the regional animal activist community, he dismissively referred to them as "middle-aged white men," which I found ironic because he was only some years away from falling into that category.

I argue that the ageism performed by Bob and some other ACT organizers had an obscure but profound connection to ACT's radical activist identity. First of all, although I have seen some ACT organizers in their forties, most participants (Sarah,

Jane, Connor, Blaire, Kate, Steph and Adam) emphasized the youth of this group in their interviews, sometimes dismissively referring to them as “kids” or “immature.” Moreover, although participants did not have detailed assessments of these, part of what defined ACT’s public image was many ACT organizers’ engagement with and performance of a youth subculture informed by anarchism and straight-edge punk veganism. Some ACT organizers’ ageism or disinterest in maintaining an intergenerational activist space might be an outcome of identifying with a youth subculture. ACT’s enactment of a radical activist youth subcultural identity and how it shaped multiple aspects of their activism, including their interactions with other activists, is unpacked in the next chapter.

Disparities between politics and activist practice.

Ageism was not the only discriminatory behaviour I witnessed coming from ACT. One would not have to look too hard to find an “it” in their literature in reference to a nonhuman animal, and Steph claimed that they occasionally used speciesist terms such as “kangaroo court.” “Redneck” was another problematic term, laden with classist connotations, that I have witnessed an ACT organizer say. Probably the most serious incident I observed in which an ACT organizer was complicit in an oppression they claim to oppose was at a protest carried out by a nearby animal activist organization that was on very good terms with ACT and supposedly adopted the same ethical and political values. Police officers were present at this demonstration and all but one were white. Some protestors were picking on the black officer, telling him to quit the force and look for another career because he would not get a promotion in racist police departments. Although I do not know if this behaviour was discussed later amongst the activists, I did not witness any protest by Bob who was present at the scene. In fact, looking like he was enjoying the moment,

Bob contributed to the taunting of the police, although not singling out the black officer. It was disheartening to see the only racialized member of a predominantly white group being targeted – for the very reason that he is a person of colour – amongst, probably even by, people who identify as anti-racist.

The next time I was concerned about a racialized person's treatment by animal activists was at an anti-Business protest organized by ACT. After getting off her tour bus, a Hispanic tourist enthusiastically chose joining the protestors instead of entering the facility. She became the center of attention for a while, but left alone shortly after her photo was shared (with her consent) through ACT's social media with an uplifting caption. Assuming that standing with a sign somewhere unfamiliar without anyone talking to her could not be a pleasant experience, I ended up spending some time chatting with her in the hope that she would not regret her decision. ACT organizers did not seem to worry that she might feel used and discarded by a group of strangers, and I was disappointed that they were not more accommodating, especially due to her social location.

I was not the only person to think that ACT organizers should have paid more attention to the social locations of the people they were interacting with. Kate argued that most patrons of The Business were either tourists or low-income people of colour who are new residents in Canada, which matches with my own observations. Echoing Adam in his critique of ACT for not reaching out to local residents, Kate also pointed out that there was no outreach to these populations. In fact, it was not ACT but Steph and Adam who came up with the idea of making signs and leaflets in languages other than English, such as Chinese and Arabic, so that the animal liberation message is also conveyed to those who do not speak English. Although a few participants underlined that ACT had good relationships with the First Nations, migrant workers,

and other immigrants, which deserves praise, these groups do not represent all people of colour, and apparently ACT did not do notable outreach to any other racialized community.

In addition to their outreach, ACT's commitment to intersectionality was also questioned. Again, in line with its radical approach, ACT did not condone welfarist campaigns, one of which was started by Brad, a former The Business employee who became a whistleblower and was sued by the corporation. Rebecca found it shameful that ACT was not supporting Brad and his campaign because of supposedly ideological reasons. Pointing out that supporting whistleblowers is a necessary element of labour advocacy after all, she thought that ACT's attitude was an aberration from an intersectional approach.

Another challenge to ACT's intersectionality arose when I asked Steph of the criteria ACT organizers would look for in order to recruit an activist into their core group. Although Adam also noted that they would prefer straight-edge people, Steph especially stressed that they would not accept smokers: “[T]heir idea of being intersectional in this case doesn't include addiction...” I believe that this is a significant observation, because of the fact that impoverished people are more likely to develop addictions (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2003). In addition to marginalized people being more vulnerable to addictions, some addictions such as smoking also work as a coping mechanism for many (Tirado, 2013). Hence, although one might have a good reason for wanting to maintain a sober activist space such as accommodating people struggling with addictions, such measures can act as barriers to others' participation.

Steph's critique of ACT's intersectionality was not limited to their position on smoking. She also criticized ACT because of their attitude regarding an issue which

unfortunately introduced significant disagreement, division, and even animosity into the regional animal activist community. This issue was the fact that, two years after ACT was formed, First Nations hunters restarted a traditional hunting practice in line with their treaty rights in an area in the region. (This phenomenon is referred to as “the Indigenous hunt” hereafter.) Some members of the regional animal activist community responded by protesting this hunt while others including ACT chose to support the First Nations arguing that it is racist and colonialist to work against Indigenous peoples' exercise of their treaty rights. Because of this stance, ACT was accused of speciesism by the protestors. The resulting fissure within the regional animal activist community has not healed to this day.

Steph criticized ACT's handling of this issue. Although, unlike some of the other participants, her views on the Indigenous hunt were close to those of ACT's, their approach to the hunt was not intersectional according to her: “[C]hoosing to ignore and actually minimize, um, the experience of the [nonhumans], um, to take a purely, um, Aboriginal ally approach was not intersectional in my opinion.” After emphasizing the value of being an ally to First Nations and of supporting treaty rights and self-determination, she added: “but do you have to also *completely* erase the... the subjectivity of the animals? I just felt like it was an unnecessary... *hit* to the animals” [Emphasis original]. Steph especially criticized a statement circulated by ACT about the Indigenous hunt in which the numbers of hunted animals were presented in a trivializing manner as if neither the lives of individual nonhumans nor the traumatic effects of losing loved ones on the surviving nonhumans matter.⁸

Writing about another First Nations hunt, Gaard (2011) claims that respecting treaty rights does not necessarily mean that no Indigenous hunt should be opposed.

⁸ Although I cannot quote the document for concerns regarding the studied animal activists' anonymity, having read the same statement, I agree with Steph's critique, especially about the trivializing mention of the numbers of hunted animals.

According to her, just like opposing Indigenous hunts bears the risk of cultural imperialism, uncritically supporting such could be an act of cultural essentialism, unless the complexity of the issue is given careful consideration (Gaard, 2011).

Although my views on Indigenous hunting are somewhat parallel to ACT's politics, I need to note my disappointment after seeing Bob publicly argue that calling this issue complicated is what racists and colonialists do. No matter what political position one takes, the overlapping of multiple layers of human and nonhuman oppressions does complicate social issues indeed, and no one should be labelled in any way for thinking that this is so.

This was also one of multiple examples of ACT being challenged for their animal advocacy. A second challenge came from Steph who claimed that ACT was reluctant to campaign for individual animals. According to Steph, ACT avoided this strategy, because they argued that it contradicts a radical paradigm for the liberation of all animals regardless of their identities or species memberships. However, Steph found highlighting individual animals' stories to be an effective way of initially attracting people's attention to the issue of animal exploitation with the hope of gradually increasing their awareness to include all animals eventually, and added that she does not see why it would contradict a radical, liberationist perspective. Corman and Vandrovcová (2014) argue that meeting individual animals enhances nonhuman advocacy. Drawing on Jacques Derrida, Aaltola (2011, p. 399-400) warns against a "faceless" animal advocacy, and writes: "It is the concrete animal in front of us who introduces us to animal singularity and opens the door for eradication of anthropocentrism;" and adds: "As Hannah Arendt famously argued, totalitarianism is partly enabled by lack of specificity." In fact, without explicitly naming it so, Steph implied that it is speciesist not to talk about individual animals: "If I was being an

activist against (...) the imprisonment of political prisoners, I would want to tell each individual prisoner's story.” I think her argument is sound, and nonhumans in captivity could indeed be considered political prisoners.

This was not the only critique of ACT’s animal advocacy. Although some participants thought ACT did remarkably well in this regard in terms of being inclusive of all animals and using a language that is respectful to nonhumans, such as avoiding the usage of gory images of animal violence for the shock value according to Kate, few others disagreed. Rebecca pointed out that, while criticizing some other activists for highlighting individual nonhumans' stories, ACT has occasionally done the same thing. ACT's one video-activism campaign for a particular animal kept in captivity at The Business was an example. Some of ACT's slogans and demonstration themes were also not all-encompassing but highlighting certain species. Participants did not have a consensus on their assessments of this strategy, but unlike Steph, some were against it, emphasizing that it inevitably results in some animals being overshadowed.

In addition to such inconsistencies regarding animal advocacy, ACT organizers occasionally acted contrary to their own measures for the well being of humans too. As noted, ACT made sure that activists were not photographed without their consent at protests. In fact, when an animal activist man posted online a photo of a woman ACT organizer taken at a protest and refused to take it down, he was rightfully called out by ACT organizers because of this problematic behaviour. Yet, Bob acted similarly by posting online a photo of animal activists (mostly women) protesting the Indigenous hunt noted above, and did not take it down despite the fact that both the photographer and a few of the pictured activists expressed discomfort with their photo being circulated. Similarly, at one ACT protest, I witnessed another

man, a white activist journalist, taking photographs of The Business patrons (most of whom were racialized) and their vehicles with their license plates visible. When animal activists who protested the Indigenous hunt took such photographs of the First Nations hunters, ACT organizers were outraged and considered this behaviour to be a racist form of harassment. However, neither during photographing many people of colour nor after sharing their photos on ACT's Facebook event page did this white activist journalist receive any public criticism from ACT organizers. Just like the photo Bob shared, these photos were not taken down.

ACT's shortcomings in creating an anti-oppressive activist alternative manifested in the internal dynamics of the organization as well, and reflected on the different roles organizers took during protests. ACT always had a multi-purpose table at their demonstrations, where assistance or guidance was provided to attendees if needed, ACT merchandize was sold, and literature and often baked goods were given away for donations by the organizers. Three activists, Sarah, Kate, and Steph, only mentioned names of women ACT organizers while talking about who was staffing this table. This pattern resonated with my participant observations too. While Bob's presence was more traditionally masculine in the sense of taking on tasks of facilitation and problem solving such as making announcements, leading chants, and liaising with the police, a traditionally feminine role which requires emotional labour was being fulfilled by women organizers. It was disappointing to see an organization founded and led by people who adopt feminist values reproduce normative and oppressive gender roles.

Another incident I witnessed at an ACT demonstration which I found contradictory to the group's politics seems to further reflect gender dynamics within the organizers. At a protest against The Business, while an attendee was filming other

activists, Ashlyn approached Bob to ask if he knew anything about this situation. Bob told her that someone messaged ACT on social media asking if they can film a documentary at an ACT protest and that he said yes. Although ACT was supposedly a consensus-based organization, apparently Bob did not feel the need to consult with Ashlyn, a woman co-organizer, and possibly others, before speaking on behalf of the group.

This example relates to one of the major critiques from participants towards ACT, that it was not consensus-based or non-hierarchical at all, despite the organizers' claims, but instead that Bob was clearly the leader of the group, and a quite authoritarian one at that. According to Jacobsson and Lindblom (2012, p. 49)

Activists typically try to build structures resistant to mechanisms of exclusion based on gender, race, age, and the like. Yet, despite their efforts, they frequently fail to live up to their own high expectations, with individuals within the group positioning themselves in an informal hierarchy.

Jones posits that that hierarchy usually ends up being gendered (2004, p. 150):

Thanks to the sex role socialization in childhood, it's very easy for women and men to slip into unequal relationships without realizing that they have done so. (...) In allegedly non-hierarchical groups, an unofficial leader often arises and often just happens to be the most masculine person in the group.

The following sections demonstrate the relevance of these quotes to the context of ACT's and other anti-Business activism.

“One-man”: leadership and hierarchy.

One might find it odd to repeatedly come across the same name, Bob, while reading a thesis on a supposedly non-hierarchical organization. In fact, most participants in this study disagreed with this characterization of ACT, arguing that

ACT's principle of non-hierarchy was indeed only in theory. Jane argued that “[Bob] was too much of what the organization was,” and other participants' agreement with her can be inferred simply from how often they began their answers to questions regarding ACT with the pronoun “he.” In this section, I explore Bob's status in ACT drawing on all three types of data.

When I asked eight participants who have attended organizational meetings how decisions were made within the group, five of them (Steph, Adam, Jane, Connor, and Rebecca) claimed that Bob made all the decisions. Connor mentioned the names of three other ACT organizers who, according to him, had *some* say in decision making. Steph also believed that there was one other ACT organizer who had “*some* say or pull at least” [Emphasis added], but only because Bob respected and looked up to her. Unsurprisingly, Shane stood out in the sample, naming some of the same ACT organizers Connor mentioned, and adding others. When I inquired if everyone had *equal* say, he answered

Well, yes and no. (...) In terms of, like, you know, where is our group right now, what do we need to be doing, you know, we would certainly look to, for instance, Bob or the more, like, um, well versed, experienced people (...), um, but in terms of, like, the actual decision making, I think that was very much a sort of everyone kind of thing.

What Shane described resembles a pattern I am familiar with from my own activist experience, a state I and my fellow activists in Turkey call *labour hierarchy*, where anyone who invests more labour into activism ends up being elevated to an unofficial higher status which results in other activists looking up to them and their opinions having at least slightly more weight than others' in group decisions. It can be argued that such a naturally developing dynamic is inevitable in activism, and perhaps

even defensible because of its fluidity that allows everyone to gain more voice through increased investment of time and energy into the cause. However, this process is not without critique. For instance, different degrees of involvement in activism could simply be the direct outcome of individuals' different levels of availability. Moreover, the question of what kinds of contributions are more visible and more valued in a particular activist setting complicates the assessment of how just this system is. Availability would likely correspond to socio-economic status through leisure time and disposable income, and it is very likely that assignment of unequal worth to different contributions would be gendered in the dominant gender regime. Although ACT organizers would probably idealize “radical participatory democracy” in which “everyone has equal voice and is welcome to participate without having to establish a reputation or credentials” (starr, 2006, p. 381), and some might even claim that ACT's principle of non-hierarchy was applied no differently than this definition, unfortunately there is ample evidence to the contrary.

While Shane was talking about how decisions were made in ACT, although my question was about the group's leadership, his descriptions sounded more like a division of labour. After he agreed with this comment of mine, I asked if he then thinks that there was no leadership structure in the organization. “Yes and no,” said Shane once more, and continued: “[L]ike, Bob for example (...), um, you know, you could tell it was kind of his baby, right? [Chuckles.]” Being a founding member, it is no surprise that Bob had a profound emotional attachment to ACT and therefore worked hard for the organization, which led him to a somewhat elevated status among other organizers. Nevertheless, neither Shane nor any other participant made similar comments about another co-founder, which demonstrates that Bob was alone in this role.

In addition to Bob's sense of belonging in ACT, according to Shane and some other participants, another reason why he did so much for the organization was meritocratic. Shane believed that Bob was taking on multiple roles and responsibilities because he was experienced and good at them. Plenty of compliments to Bob were present in interviews within which being a hard worker, knowledgeable, and articulate stood out. Yet, as noted above, ACT made a commitment to encourage all its members to develop their weaker skills, but this was not a very successful attempt according to Steph, which resulted in no other organizer reaching a level of knowledge and public speaking skill that would allow them to join Bob in representing the group. Although Shane argued that Ashlyn “was a pretty big spokesperson *for a little bit*” [Emphasis added], and he was too for some time to a lesser extent, most participants did not recall any spokesperson other than Bob. Sarah remembered that Ashlyn spoke on behalf of ACT in one interview, but only until Bob took it over according to Adam's recollections. After reflecting on said interview, I agreed with Adam's interpretation.⁹ It seems like Bob occupied the group representative role pretty much alone as well.

Bob's exclusive representation of ACT could be observed online. Statements on behalf of ACT were almost always made by him, and the phone number listed as ACT's contact information was his. According to Connor, the fact that one person stood out as the ultimate public representative of ACT was enough evidence to conclude that this group was indeed hierarchical. Other participants agreed. Jane believed that Bob was “running the show completely.” Steph's observation was no different: “I would describe ACT as Bob. I wouldn't say he's the leader of ACT; I'd

⁹ This interview is another document I cannot cite for this would jeopardize the anonymity of the studied animal activists.

say he *is* ACT. I'm sorry if that discredits the abilities and efforts of the other people because I know [they work] really hard.”

Other ACT organizers were being overshadowed by Bob's big presence indeed. Participants in this study were not alone in associating ACT with Bob. My observation of the interactions on ACT's social media promotions of their activism suggests that many attendees of ACT demonstrations gave Bob virtually all of the credit for the organizing, although it is surely a collective endeavour. I witnessed people directing their questions to Bob on social media even when they asked those publicly. One person, for instance, felt the need to consult Bob to determine if their idea of a sign was appropriate. Many others thanked, praised, and congratulated Bob for ACT's organizing. Surprisingly enough, Bob simply accepted the compliments in these instances and thanked the commenter, instead of humbly reminding them that he should not be the only one acknowledged and emphasizing the importance of the hard work of his fellow organizers.

This behaviour resonates with the accounts of participants who believed that Bob actually enjoyed and desired the status that came out of his organizing with ACT, more than it does with Shane's argument that he was only reluctantly fulfilling the role he simply found himself in. Many participants claimed that Bob actually wanted to have control over the ongoing activism, and a few shared their experiences and observations as anecdotal evidence. Connor said that Bob took over a presentation on which the two of them were working together, similar to the ACT interview Ashlyn was giving. “I could not get a word in,” Connor said. Steph also told that a newly emerging animal advocacy campaign (independent from the opposition to The Business) failed prematurely when Bob interfered after disapproving how the sub-committee of activist volunteers went with the project. According to Steph, as a result,

the connections these activists had already made were severed, and they disappeared from organizational meetings where this topic was never brought up again. Recalling that (while still doing activism with REG) Bob was troubled by not having a key to the house where the activist material was kept because he was not a board member, which he saw as a manifestation of the hierarchy within that organization, Rebecca found it ironic that Bob ended up becoming a figure with so much power, authority, and control.

Although the anti-Business campaign has been furthered for decades thanks to the invaluable work by numerous activists, Bob appeared as a highly influential activist figure in the region due to the unmatched experience, knowledge and skills attributed to him by many, which is arguably unfairly dismissive of more seasoned activists. Adam claimed that “[other ACT organizers] could not make a move without Bob's presence, permission, or affirmation.” In fact, according to Adam, this was one of the reasons why ACT disbanded, because there was no one other than Bob who was capable of taking on the responsibility of running the organization. Interestingly enough, Sarah remembers feeling like a member of “an army without a leader” once at an ACT demonstration when Bob was a bit late in showing up.

Bob's leadership of ACT as well as his previous activist experience led to the development of his image as a prestigious activist, and he occupied significant amount of space in the regional activist community, sometimes to the detriment of progressive politics. For instance, Rebecca remembers that, after a vigil for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Bob was the only attendee quoted in the media. Of course, quoting no one except a white settler man while covering a news item regarding First Nations women is at least partially the journalist's fault, and considering Bob's political views I assume that he was disappointed with this outcome

too. Yet, as an ally, he could have chosen to not make a statement and instead to help amplify Indigenous women's voices by directing the journalist to an Onkwehon:we organizer of the vigil. Another example of Bob taking too much space at a demonstration he did not organize occurred at a pro-Palestine, anti-Israeli occupation rally. After he showed up, he led the crowd to take the street without talking to the organizers, and he was thanked online, again, for his efforts. One of the actual organizers of the rally shared their frustration with me arguing that it was disrespectful of Bob to intervene and take initiative without consulting with the organizers who were disappointed that he ended up taking credit for an action he did not organize.

All these examples support the notion that Bob occupied a prestigious position as a prominent activist organizer within the region, which came with fame, attention, and power, that all participants except Sarah and Shane thought he already longed for. In fact, Kate argued that Bob attempted to “brand himself” through his physical and online presence. He succeeded too, according to Kate, who claimed that some people in the region came to associate animal advocacy and even veganism with Bob.

Of course, this did not happen overnight, but through a gradual process, and participants had certain theories about why and how this process took place. Having already established a reputation in the region with his history of activism, Bob's influence only increased, according to Blaire and Steph, after the negative publicity The Business received and the consequent growth of the activist opposition. Facing the challenge of managing a significantly larger activist base, ACT needed to develop an organizational structure, an example of which being the community agreements mentioned above. Steph argued that, although it was presented as the product of collective effort, it was Bob who made the structure of the group which led to the

separation of people he had disagreements with from the organization while others who shared similar viewpoints to his stayed. Rebecca added that being sued by The Business earned Bob significant subcultural capital, elevating him to a higher status in the regional social justice activist community. Already bearing the radicalism, which is a highly-prized feature in activist subcultures, through a perceived suffering and sacrificing for the cause (Jacobsson & Lindblom, 2012; Kennelly, 2009b), Bob obtained somewhat of a martyr status after being sued, which got him closer to a dominant radical activist ideal. starr (2006, p. 378) believes that hegemonically masculine framings of courage and sacrifice (two aspects of Bob's elevated status) are inadvertently smuggled by activists into social justice movements, even by feminists occasionally.

The perfect activist(s).

Everything that was shared about Bob by the participants as well as my observations in physical and virtual activist spaces resonate with what is argued in the literature about what makes someone a cherished figure in activist subcultures in the Global North (Jacobsson & Lindblom, 2012; Kennelly, 2009b; 2011; Starr, 2004; starr, 2006). His embodiment of a highly respected, radical, no-compromise political stance, his interpretation of this politics and translation of it into activist strategies, and his personal and social behaviour such as being vegan and presenting veganism as a fundamental necessity in animal activism all contributed to this perfect activist image Bob carried in the region. Activists' interpretations of and reactions to this image varied. While some were put off by this persona or intimidated by it, others admired Bob, longed for his appreciation and acceptance in his organization ACT.

What about the other organizers who were already in ACT's core group with Bob? Except Bob, only four other ACT organizers were brought up by participants in

a way that required their mention in this analysis. However, I found it troubling that Bob was turning out to be the answer to so many questions, and I was curious about the other organizers, what their roles were in these dynamics, and how they navigated Bob's strong persona while organizing for ACT together. Participants had a variety of opinions on this topic, and although I was wary of any explanation that assumes the passivity of other ACT organizers, such comments were abundant.

According to some participants, other organizers were not aware of Bob's de facto rule, and believed that they were members who had equal leverage in decision making. Blaire said: "I think that a lot of them are just kind of mouthpieces for Bob, [Chuckles] but they don't really realize it." But how does one not realize such a thing? Being young and inexperienced in activism was a major reason for such an obliviousness according to Adam and Rebecca, who also added that they thought Bob recruited from this population on purpose because he did not want to be challenged. Rebecca said that Bob usually worked with "young, new activists, who don't really know much about what's happened [in the regional activist context in the past] or, like, they're new in the movement." Moreover, Steph thought Bob had a way of making people feel like they have made a decision and presenting his own decisions on the meeting minutes as if these were made collectively. Lara, an experienced ACT organizer, was not "fully aware of how awful [Bob] actually is" either, according to Steph, "because she's very highly respected and has not experienced any of this [Bob's dominant and allegedly manipulative behaviour]."

There was clearly a tight bond between Bob and the other ACT organizers. Jane thought that this was because "[other ACT organizers] are either like Bob, or they want to be like him." Both explanations got support in the interviews. While Connor and Adam claimed that all ACT organizers were simply friends of Bob and

thus already had similar viewpoints, Jane argued that some ACT organizers “adore” Bob as a role model. Except Shane, all participants thought that, because of all aforementioned dynamics, ACT was somewhere between a *clique* of Bob and his friends and a *cult* led by him and populated by his followers. “It’s actually just like high school cliques” commented Steph. Connor echoed by arguing that working with REG has been easier for him because there was no “cliquey high-school mentality” in this organization. He also agreed with Blaire’s claim that ACT organizers “were assigned this cult status by a lot of people.”

Of course, being so close to Bob both physically and ideologically, other ACT organizers also embodied his perfect radical activist image to some extent. This is why entering this group was very important for Kate when she used to think so highly of them: “They were the cool kids, you know, vegans. These are the people that I want to be with and I want to be part of this so badly. (...) I really did try to impress them.” Kate added that she was far from being the only one trying to impress the cool kids:

I was trying to prove myself and, um, I do think other people do try to prove themselves, because when somebody doesn’t... when somebody you think so highly of doesn’t like you, like, and I’m talking about the group, and you think (...) “I just need to try more.” That’s how they made me feel.

Interestingly enough, we know that Kate was not alone in feeling this way thanks to Shane’s recollection of his experience of organizing in ACT. After sharing that he was accused of being “too liberal” by some organizers of ACT, Shane claimed that “you have to prove yourself” to be a part of that group.

starr discusses how this attitude is linked to whiteness:

In radical white organizing, once people have gathered to participate in social action, a major activity is securing the radicalism of the group, which consists of identifying and vilifying any “reformists” or reformist proposals. It also may involve some kind of subtle litmus test of the martyrial militancy of members – their willingness to engage in high-risk direct action. Those who do not pass are unofficially disregarded. These tests and the resulting rigid (although unacknowledged or even denied) hierarchy is not missed by those demoted, who feel unwanted or excluded. They may not return to future group events, but their loss is considered unimportant by those who prioritize radicalism and/or militance. The performative requirements of sufficiently impressing the radicals may become a preoccupation of remaining members. (2006, p. 383)

But impressing this group of people did not sound easy. It seemed like ACT organizers had very rigid ideas about politics and activism. For instance, Rebecca claimed that Bob and some other ACT organizers publicly equated not being vegan with not genuinely caring about nonhumans, and delegitimized activist efforts by non-vegans. Steph echoed: “[T]hey had these notions that you need to be fully vegan, and not smoking cigarettes, in order to be, um, accepted, included, and viewed as a legitimate activist with a legitimate voice.” She added: “So Bob basically doesn't allow me to have a vegan identity. I'm not vegan according to him. And one of the reasons why I shouldn't be involved in protesting anything (..) was because I smoke cigarettes.” After underlining that “all activists care,” Socha (2013, p. 44) writes that she has “no interest in fueling word wars based in human ego,” which were abundant in this regional animal activist community according to most participants.

Participants also argued that, while judging others for their choices, ACT organizers were very confident of their own decisions. Adam said that “they only believe in their way of doing activism.” Connor added that he thought ACT organizers felt like they were better people because of the quantity and quality of activism they were doing. What Connor describes resembles the “in-your-face superiority complex” of animal activists (Greenebaum, 2009, p. 301) which even alienates like-minded people and results in many who feel and act compassionately towards nonhumans to adamantly refrain from being associated with an activist identity.

The concepts of cool and radicalism warrant further analysis. These look quite entangled in this context, because it seems that Bob and other ACT organizers were considered cool by some people mostly due to their ideological as well as performative radicalism. After underlining that the definition of the term is simply challenging the roots of a problem, Socha (2013a, p. 45) emphasizes that radicalism still “should not designate presumption of ethical perfection or untainted rebellion.” The fact that it did in the context of ACT seems to be a major problem. starr (2006, p. 382) argues that this understanding of radicalism in the context of social justice activism includes not only embracing radical ideas but also having “[the] ‘correct’ interpretation, reasoning, and application of principles in a given situation.” She claims that the consequent hierarchy of being “correctly radical” having the highest value in activist countercultures “echoes exclusionary social class structures and could be the unwitting internalization of class elitism” (2006, p. 383). starr (2006, p. 379) believes that activists with socioeconomic privilege feel more dignified and less complicit in ongoing oppressions through dissociating themselves and their activism from “professionalism, managerialism, and status symbols,” which resembles

Kennelly's (2011) interpretation of the working-class performances of some privileged activists as “performing grunge”.

Moreover, Rachel Luft (as cited in starr, 2006, p.383) points out that some antiracists find the term radical to be a symptom of “white culture, an abstract, exclusive, either/or standard that is more distracting or divisive than it is galvanizing, empowering, or productive.” starr (2006, p. 383) adds: “While ideological and tactical radicalism exists in antiracist organizing, they are not the standard by which organizations and organizers relate with participants. Instead, friendliness, comfort, safety, generosity, and reliable personal connection are the necessary elements of 'good' political work.” Unfortunately, most participants would argue that many of these, if not all, were absent in ACT's activism. Although the core ACT organizers seemed to be strongly connected to each other through friendship and camaraderie, because of the exclusionary nature of this group and the aggression of some of its members, many animal activists in the region could not be a part of this community and be supported by it in their activism against The Business. On the contrary, interviewed anti-Business activists portrayed ACT as being the opposite of warm and supportive. According to Sarah, Jane, Adam, Blaire, and Steph, ACT organizers were neither friendly nor approachable. Steph claimed that “there are, like, probably hundreds of people in [this region] right now that would not attend an ACT demo, just will not do it, will not feel *safe* doing so” [Emphasis added]. The unreliability of personal connection in this activist context is explored in detail in the next chapter in relation to the frequent interpersonal conflicts that occurred in the region.

Coolness, according to starr, is based on emotional detachment and is a harmful notion unwittingly smuggled into social justice activism: “Cool is a problem for activists because it gets us into a place where we then feel undignified and

vulnerable smiling, approaching someone, talking to strangers, being unilaterally *friendly*. All of that is very un-cool” [Emphasis original] (2006, p. 384). In addition to this unfriendliness, an individual hero culture is symptomatic of what starr (2006) calls “white organizing” in which individualism comes before community. To explain why she thinks that white activists and activists of colour differ in this sense and that why individualism is more prominent in white organizing in the Global North, starr (2006, p. 380) writes: “While white activists are also under pressure to conform, revolt is encouraged by white traditions which valorize defiant and expressive individualism.” According to her (starr, 2006), people of colour, who are more likely to value family and community dearly due to the material realities of their lives and are more used to their political struggles being based on supportive relations within their communities, have difficulty in relating to, trusting, and feeling comfortable around activists who condemn and often have destructive conflicts with each other. To reemphasize that problems such as toxic masculinity and whiteness that hurt activist communities are not exclusive to animal advocacy but present in other social justice movements too, it would be helpful to reemphasize that starr’s (2006) analysis that applies so well to this case study is in fact on the alterglobalization movement in the US.

Conclusion

After briefly providing the history and context of anti-Business activism and introducing research participants as well as the animal activist organization ACT, this chapter focused on critiques of ACT by a diverse sample of anti-Business activists. The narrative shaped by all interviews, participant observations, and textual data is that, after its exciting formation and initial success in building community in the region and galvanizing activism against The Business, ACT fell short of fulfilling its

promises and disbanded. ACT seems to have suffered from a rigid understanding of ethics and a lack of tolerance for deviations from their understanding of being “correctly radical” (starr, 2006), or what Alexis Shotwell (2016) would call “purity politics.” Data suggest that this was an outcome of ACT being highly influenced by one of its co-founders, Bob. A white activist man with significant cultural capital, Bob’s activist status was further elevated through the subcultural capital he gained through being sued by The Business. While he became more respected and prestigious, a specific radical youth subculture (anarchist, vegan, straight-edge, etc.) Bob subscribed to pervaded ACT to the extent of his persona getting ahead of the organization and ACT being reduced to one man in the eyes of many people in the region. While Bob’s allegedly authoritarian de facto rule was a major inconsistency for ACT, a supposedly non-hierarchical and consensus based group, some ACT organizers had frequent conflicts with other activists and shunned them for deviating from ACT’s activist philosophy, which was antithetical to the group’s goal of community-building. Some ACT organizers ended up violating their own principles of anti-oppression and damaging the regional animal activist community with their aggression. The next chapter deepens this analysis through the investigation of communication (or the lack thereof) in ACT and amongst various figures in the regional animal activist community.

Chapter Five: Communication (or the lack thereof)

This chapter explores communication – a central aspect of animal advocacy and every other social justice movement – amongst activists, and occasionally between activists and various relevant figures, in the context of the political opposition to The Business. Explored areas include ACT organizers' interactions with each other, with activists who attended ACT meetings or events, and with some others such as The Business patrons, the police, journalists, and the general public. Some topics from the previous chapter are revisited in this one with the intent of deepening and widening the analysis, including further developing and strengthening some themes such as masculinity and whiteness in the anti-Business activist community and the working-class performance (Kennelly, 2011) of activists possessing some classed privileges such as access to formal higher education. Building on the previous one, this chapter's main argument is that honest, responsible, and empathetic conversation, which is not only common courtesy but also a feminist principle for equitable activist organizing (Jones, 2004), was almost absent amongst anti-Business activists, while the state of communication in this community was harmed by Bob's and ACT's problematic enactment of a rigid and exclusionary radical activist subculture, rife with undertones of masculinity, whiteness, and class privilege. Interpersonal as well as inter- and intra-organizational conflicts that arose amongst activists as a result of ideological and cultural clashes – and how they were handled in this activist community which seems to be highly influenced by whiteness and heroic (Kheel, 1993; 2006) masculinity – constitute a primary focus of this chapter.

The first section of this chapter explores ACT organizers' silence regarding important subjects concerning anti-Business activists, including the handling of certain disagreements within the regional social justice community and how to

maintain a true anti-oppression struggle for all. Intense inter-activist conflicts and the aggression that prevailed in the communication between social justice advocates in the region are discussed in the next section. My data suggest that the elevated tension in the community was mostly due to individual and organizational identities dominating the activist space. One aspect of this issue appears to be ACT's performance of an exclusionary, radical, subcultural activist identity, and some organizers' attempts to impose their rigid ethics of purity (Shotwell, 2016) on the entire social justice community in the region. These ACT organizers' efforts to control other activists' behaviour, and loss of trust to people for not following their understanding of anti-oppression is discussed as an aspect of this rigid subculture. Then, another identity that hurt the animal advocacy in the region – mostly by curtailing women's voices and activist labour – is investigated: heroic, masculine leadership identity. The chapter is concluded with a brief discussion of the harm activists caused to themselves and each other through unhealthy patterns of communication, and participants' visions for the future of anti-Business activism.

Readers would remember that some found anti-Business protestors inconsiderate in some of their interactions with the patrons of this facility. As noted, Shane was one activist who felt this way. After hearing that I also found the aggressive taunting and shaming of The Business patrons problematic, Shane said:

I bet if... maybe if you were, you know, with the group in the day, you know, you could have mentioned that and I think people would be like 'Oh yeah. Maybe let's change it around,' or 'Let's try something else.'

In the activist sample of this research, Shane was alone in thinking that ACT organizers were open to critique and change. Many other participants would strongly disagree that it was possible to influence ACT through productive dialogue. "I would

make these comments (...) and offer some advice [but] they just wanted to do it their own way,” said Jane. Steph argued that “ACT refused to communicate.” Participants did not only share numerous instances which made them feel as though ACT organizers were not interested in hearing their opinions let alone changing their ways, but they also consistently emphasized that one did not simply become “a part of the group,” because it was virtually a closed circle of friends, a clique.

Although Shane never used the term *clique*, he did acknowledge that “inside jokes” as well as “chatty, gossipy stuff” that were abundant at ACT meetings might have made those less welcoming for newcomers. His comment supports the notion that ACT organizers were indeed a close group of friends as most participants suggested. Although Shane is a participant who had been a member of that friendship circle, many other activists who attended ACT meetings were not, and naturally, they experienced those differently. Many participants who have been to ACT meetings reported feeling like an outsider and failing to gain a sense of belonging in this group. As noted in the previous chapter, Kate was one of these participants; and her experiences illuminate one important aspect of communication (or the lack thereof) within ACT: Silence.

In the next section, I discuss participants’ critiques of ACT concerning the lack of communication on important subjects such as ACT’s controversial leadership and the nonhuman animals themselves for whom activists are advocating. Also, part of this silence was the fact that many anti-Business activists were not being provided necessary information by ACT to understand, analyze, and solve certain significant conflicts and disagreements in the regional social justice community. Topics on which people felt like they were kept in the dark by some ACT organizers range from ACT’s

organizational decisions to vague abuse allegations within the regional community, which definitely concerned every member.

Silence

Despite her enthusiasm and hard work, Kate was not accepted into the core group of ACT organizers, and she did not know why. After voicing a few speculations that mostly reflected her resulting feelings of self-consciousness about her personality, behaviour, and political approach, she noted that she could never obtain an actual explanation for being excluded. Kate recalled feeling left out at meetings when ACT organizers talked about activist events they had recently attended, because she was not invited to any of them. Kate recorded showing interest and asking them to let her know the next time, which was followed by ACT organizers seeming to agree and assure her that she would be notified, only to continue the same pattern: ““Oh, next time will you guys let me know?” and they're like ‘Oh yeah! Okay.’ And then they never did (...) I was very disappointed because I've so believed in activism and I really loved getting involved.” Moreover, Kate noted that ACT organizers have many times scheduled ACT meetings in her presence but did not invite her although they knew how willing she was to attend. Connor, on the other hand, was not even aware of ACT meetings separate from the Umbrella meetings he attended (Chapter Four, footnote one), although he did consider himself a member of ACT and did activist work within this organization. These examples mark the first dimension of ACT organizers' silence: not sharing certain pieces of information with activists outside of the core organizing group, which participants consequently viewed as being a closed circle of friends, or a clique.

Many participants echoed Kate and Connor in claiming that ACT organizers did not share certain important pieces of information with them, which limited their

capacity to develop a fuller understanding of the dynamics of activism in the region and to make meaningful contributions. For instance, Blaire remembers not getting an adequate explanation after her suggestion to co-organize activist events with REG was rejected. Although ACT partially emerged out of REG and the two organizations maintained a solidarity for a period, ACT organizers decided to end this working relationship, and many activists attending ACT meetings were not knowledgeable of this fact let alone its reason. Kate recalled hearing one phrase repeatedly on this subject from Ken, another ACT organizer man: “They don't like the way we organize, and we don't like the way they organize.” Not being afforded a satisfactory explanation even after the issue was brought up led to confusion for Blaire and Kate.

ACT organizers were also accused of not sharing significant information regarding an abuse allegation within the anti-Business activist community. ACT organizers were accusing an animal activist man (Max), who did significant work with ACT, of being abusive towards his then-partner (Kim), another hard-working activist in ACT at the time. Steph, Jane, and Connor brought up this topic to make different points, but they shared the sentiment that they were neither provided necessary knowledge on this situation nor included in the conversation on how to handle it. All three remembered many members of the regional animal activist community (including themselves) believing that the said relationship was simply a dysfunctional one in which both parties were hurtful towards each other while ACT organizers were calling Max an abuser without much clarification. Of course, alerting our communities to the danger of abuse and attempting to eradicate it are political duties essential to social justice activism. Moreover, people's failure to fully grasp gendered interpersonal power dynamics might lead them to inaccurately interpret particular cases of abuse as mutual, and obscure the question of responsibility. Yet,

Steph adamantly argued that, in this example, a proper accountability process was not initiated. For instance, Creative Interventions (2012), a resource centre in service of communities struggling with interpersonal violence, emphasizes that a community member who has done harm needs allies too, contrary to ACT's attempts to isolate Max. Moreover, Steph claimed that many community members who must have been included in the discussions and decisions about Max were kept in the dark. She blamed Bob for the division in the regional social justice community caused by this poorly handled process, emphasizing that she tried very hard to reach out to him to get informed about this conflict between two anti-Business animal activists, but he did not cooperate:

Bob would say to me things like, *mansplain* basically, things like [imitating a dominant masculine voice] "Watcha gotta understand, Steph, is I have information on Max that I'm not gonna reveal. You just have to believe me." Well, no. I'm not going to stop speaking to a close friend of mine who has been good to me because you have a secret you won't reveal to me. That's not the way accountability processes work [Emphasis added].

When I asked how the decision to distance Max from the activist community was made by ACT, Steph further emphasized the dominant masculinity in Bob's actions:

It is not transparent! So, I have no fucking idea! Like, the decisions that were made around Max [were] so sneaky and secretive. And I was asking blatant, outright questions that were not being answered, so I really don't know how that process came to be. I heard different stories from different people. (...) [T]he actual facts behind any of it is...is usually kept from us as if we couldn't *handle* the truth. (...) Bob is the *holder* of the truth. You see? And that's why none of us can really make any decisions, because we don't have the whole

story. (...) So if he's the holder of the information, then I actually can't make an informed decision, so I *have to* let Bob make the decision..." [Emphases original].

Five more participants (Jane, Adam, Blaire, Connor, and Kate) criticized ACT for its “secrecy” and lack of “transparency.” Connor argued that ACT organizers’ silence on such important subjects contradicted their principles, because “keeping information from people is an act of oppression.” As Creative Interventions (2012, p. 4.A-3), suggests:

While not everyone needs to know every detail of the situation, out of concern for privacy, confidentiality or safety issues, many will want some basic information in order to decide if and how they want to get involved. Good information will also help everyone to make better decisions about what actions to take.

Not being informed properly on various subjects made some activists suspicious about ACT too. Jane and Adam were both concerned about the organization's finances for instance. After mentioning a fund ACT had started to eventually use to help relocate the captive nonhumans at The Business into caring facilities for rehabilitation, Adam added that what happened to the money in that fund is unknown considering that ACT disbanded and said animals are still in captivity. Jane complained about a lack of transparency and accountability in ACT's finances as well. She claimed that when ACT organizers asked for donations, the goals and outcomes of their fundraising were not always clear. Such suspicions and allegations were unsettling to hear, especially about a radical grassroots animal activist organization that espouses an anti-capitalist ideology. I have no doubt that ACT

organizers would feel insulted by being doubted in this regard, which could have been averted through a proactive improvement of activist communication and transparency.

In addition to inter-organizational discrepancies and finances, many more important subjects were not talked about at ACT meetings. Interestingly enough, animals were one of them. When I inquired about the ACT discussions regarding how to maintain the anti-Business campaign free from speciesism, anthropocentrism, anthropomorphism, human saviour mentality and such, Kate and Connor both said: “We didn't really talk about animals.” For Kate, this omission was characteristic of ACT organizers' tendency to assume that everyone at the meetings was (or had to be) equally knowledgeable on any subject concerning anti-Business, animal, and even social justice activism in general. “I didn't learn about anything through them,” said Kate. While it is uplifting that some animal rights activists in Sweden talk about their activist involvement as “going to movement school” (Hansson & Jacobsson, 2014, p. 277), data suggest that not many people are likely to use similar words about ACT.

After doing her own research on relevant subjects, Kate still felt self-conscious around ACT organizers about the scope of her knowledge: “I faked my way through a few conversations.” In addition to noting that ACT organizers revered knowledge and experience, many participants also felt the need to acknowledge that these accumulate gradually, and activists need to be patient with and supportive of others who are in early stages of an animal or other social justice activism journey (see Cheng Thom, 2015; Ziyad, 2016). Rebecca emphasized that “educating people is [our] job as activists.” Yet, a number of participants complained about ACT organizers not sufficiently informing newcomers, and Adam added that “no proper direction [was provided] for people who wanted to help.”

In addition to the restricted flow of information, another aspect of silence inside ACT was regarding a key subject: the leadership structure of this supposedly non-hierarchical organization which, on the contrary, was often perceived as far as being a “cult” organized around “one man,” according to Connor, Rebecca, and Blaire. The fact that Bob became the public face of ACT to the point of being regarded as the entire grassroots organization by himself was no secret in the regional social justice community, and both Bob and other ACT organizers were certainly aware of it. Some participants even suggested that Bob came to be perceived as the representative of all social justice activism in the region, including but not limited to animal advocacy and veganism. This fact must have allowed him to take over the pro-Palestine, anti-Israeli occupation rally mentioned in Chapter Four.

As established, many participants believe that Bob did not obtain this status overnight, but that it was the consequence of a complicated process. Curious about how ACT (including Bob and other organizers) negotiated with and navigated this reality, I asked Shane how this topic was discussed within the group. I was surprised to hear that this was one of the many important subjects that were not addressed at organizational meetings: “We probably appeared a lot more, like, top-down (...) [but] I don't think that ever came up.” In fact, no participant could recall such a discussion at an organizational meeting.

Why were such important subjects not discussed at ACT meetings? Although, clearly, ACT organizers did not initiate such discussions, other activists could have. Yet, some ACT organizers’ negative reactions to others’ contributions were making it quite difficult to do so. For instance, although Shane said “we definitely pursued new ideas,” participants often told instances of their ideas or someone else's opinions getting shut down by ACT organizers, and never being supported. This commonly

shared experience was also often accompanied by a comment regarding the inconsistency between ACT's philosophy and activist practice. For instance, Blaire mentioned that ACT organizers used to ask people to "come with action items," only to disregard their suggestions at the meetings. Hence, she believed that ACT organizers asking for help and input was an "empty gesture." Adam called the same behaviour "dishonest talk." Connor described organizational meetings as "a façade of everyone having a say," and argued that "people were given the idea that they were contributing, but their ideas weren't taken seriously" by core ACT organizers. Despite my lack of firsthand observation of said meetings, I have also encountered evidence to this claim that the core ACT organizers were not very much interested in others' opinions: After consulting with ACT followers about a demonstration schedule in an online poll, Bob announced on behalf of ACT that the group decided to go forward with the third most popular option which only got six votes, 17 percent.

Participants suggested that ACT organizers said no to most suggestions that came from others. But, obviously, ACT did decide in favour of some ideas, which were then actualized. Interestingly enough, Kate and Blaire argued that those decisions were not made at the meetings but prior. Their claim was that ACT organizers used organizational meetings to dictate what they have already decided about ACT's future activism to other activists, including when, where, what the next action is going to be, and who would take which role. The roles Bob took (that were conveyed as already-made decisions at organizational meetings) were mostly about communication, required him to be the face and the voice of ACT, and allowed him to act on behalf of the group as the police liaison, media spokesperson, announcer, chant leader, and so forth, reinforcing the masculine representation of this animal activist organization. Not being included in the decision-making processes, Blaire and Kate

could not confidently answer to who had how much say in delegating Bob to all of these roles, but they mostly believed that these decisions were all made by Bob himself.

Steph, Adam, and Rebecca, whose involvement predates Blaire's and Kate's, did remember being at meetings where organizational decisions were made. They too supported the notion that Bob had the ultimate say in virtually every decision. In addition to remembering many suggestions being disregarded, Adam shared that some ACT organizers even ridiculed ideas sometimes: “[Y]ou would give them a suggestion, [and] they would say ‘Nah. Nah. That's stupid. We can't do that.’” Steph’s ideas were mocked too, keeping her from contributing to the anti-Business activism: “Everything that I ever tried to add to a meeting was shut down by Bob, laughed at, um, made fun of, um, dismissed.” These reactions certainly discouraged many meeting attendees from speaking their minds. Moreover, Steph's description of the discussions leading to ACT decisions underscores Bob's status as “the holder of knowledge” and a masculine figure who overshadowed women's voices:

Bob is literally running every single meeting. Um, and, even if it's not apparent that he's running the meeting, he's also the one who's answering to everything. Like, so, when an issue comes up [and] the facilitator says “Okay, the next thing on the list we have to talk about is whatever,” everybody turns to Bob and waits for him to tell us what it is we're supposed to know about that thing. And, then if you say “Oh I was thinking...” Oh no. [Imitating dominant masculine voice.] “What you got to understand is...” (...) Um, and all decisions are literally made by Bob, regardless of he may make it seem in the [meeting minutes]. Um, every decision is, and every aspect of the meeting is facilitated by Bob. It is run by Bob.

What happened, then, when an idea of Bob was not approved by another activist at the meeting, or vice versa? Data suggest that such disagreements often escalated into aggressive conflicts between activists, and even irreparable divisions.

The next section explores many conflicts that took place within the anti-Business activist community. Although many disagreements and the resulting divisions in the regional social justice community looked ideological or tactical, many participants argued that these were in fact personal, that is, rooted in activist individuals' grudges against one another, competition for power or publicity, or aggressive attitude towards other members of the regional social justice community. Some participants even claimed that some ACT organizers framed personal problems as political in order to distance some of their rivals from the regional activist community. Participants argued that the aggressive conflicts in this activist context most frequently occurred between men, hindering women's activist efforts and recognition, and that the tension in the community must have hurt the activist movement as a whole by alienating potential activists.

(Personal) conflicts and aggression

Conflicts between animal activist individuals and organizations in the region constituted an issue too big and obvious to ignore. According to Shane, these conflicts were because of "some differences in tactics and some differences in ideology." Frankly, I also thought so until interviewing activists who unequivocally argued that said conflicts were "personal." Before interviewing activists, it appeared to me as though animal advocates in the region were simply clashing due to their different views and strategic preferences; in other words, when their debates were not resolved productively, when the difference between their approaches was too fundamental or complex to handle, they decided to end their working relationships and did not

cooperate further. Although diversity is an asset in all aspects of social justice activism for many reasons, refusing to work with another activist because of ideological disputes is understandable and not necessarily problematic. Yet, all participants – including Shane – believed that almost all of the conflicts that emerged between activists throughout ACT’s anti-Business campaign were *personal*. What they meant was that these conflicts were induced by grudges Bob (and some other ACT organizers) held against others in the regional activist community.

When Blaire referred to disputes amongst regional animal advocates over the aforementioned Indigenous hunt as personal conflicts, I asked why she thought this issue was not a political disagreement. After acknowledging the significance of ideological differences in the dispute, Blaire argued that “it has definitely become uglier (...) because those people [animal activists who occupy seemingly incompatible stances on this issue] don't like each other anyway.” In fact, she even claimed that (in this case and a few others) Bob and some other ACT organizers “[have used] politics and radical perspectives as a façade to legitimate bad blood” they had with some people who used to be their friends and activist fellows, “masked it in rhetoric that those people were shitty people, bad progressives.” In other words, Blaire believed that Bob and some other ACT organizers deliberately fuelled differences in activist approaches to escalate personal conflicts into political controversies which provided them a ground of justification to cut off their activist ties to people they no longer got along with.

Many more similar examples were shared by participants. In fact, Max's alleged relationship abuse and accountability process, which caused a major and sensational division within the regional social justice activist community, constituted another example for personal conflicts according to Steph: “It was kind of interesting

that Bob and Ken, who already hated Max, decided to call out Max as being an abuser and wanted him to go through an accountability process that was not being made public.” Steph, Jane, Blaire, Kate, Connor, and Rebecca listed many people who were distanced from ACT in this way and discouraged from participating in any form of activism in the region. Rebecca, Adam, and Steph believed that these were Bob's personal fights, power struggles he had mostly with other activists, because they were taking attention that Bob wanted to consolidate in himself and his organization ACT. Jane, Rebecca, and Steph even mentioned animal activist organizations and communities in different cities being “destroyed” as a result of conflicts that were allegedly started by Bob or another ACT organizer for competitive reasons, although these were disguised as political and ideological. Tensions between ACT and anti-Business activist individuals (including Brad, a few participants, and a number of others) as well as organizations (such as REG and many more) were attributed to the same reason. Sarah described inter-activist conflicts as “clashes between people, strong egos,” through which Bob and other ACT organizers have “made enemies” according to Kate.

Although some ACT organizers had equally aggressive conflicts with women too, men's names appeared much more often in participants' accounts of the conflicts within the activist community. The number of men mentioned in this thesis hints at how much space men occupied in this woman-majority animal activist community. Other influential men with whom ACT organizers had conflicts included journalists, politicians, bureaucrats, as well as the owner of *The Business*. A British antiglobalization activist participant of Lara Coleman and Serena Bassi's research (2011, p. 213) describes their movement as “a competition among alpha-males,” the exact words Steph used to portray men's dominance in the anti-Business campaign.

The resulting “masculinist speech culture” (i.e. the conversation space being dominated by men’s expressiveness) Nicole Doerr (as cited in Coleman & Bassi, 2011, p. 205) observed during the organization of a European activist gathering which “produced varying degrees of invisibility for women activists,” seems to have injured the regional anti-Business activist community too.

Infighting between (mostly men) activists and other (mostly women) activists being sidelined constituted only one dimension of the damage inflicted by some ACT organizers’ aggression towards this community. Participants noted that Bob and other ACT organizers were not only aggressive in their disputes with people they already knew, but also towards newcomers in animal advocacy. According to Rebecca, many people who joined the anti-Business campaign after the negative media publicity were neither experienced in activism nor very knowledgeable about speciesism or other forms of oppression, but they still received similarly aggressive reactions from ACT organizers for making suggestions considered unfit for ACT’s approach or simply asking for clarifications. Saying ACT organizers did “more call-outs than call-ins,” Shane admitted that cutting people off from anti-Business activism because of their alleged problematic behaviour took precedence over attempting to win them over through friendly communication. Some organizers of ACT, a self-identified consensus-based group, did not seem to think that everyone concerned for nonhumans equally deserves to be a part of this consensus.

Many participants including Jane, Adam, and Steph added that ACT organizers’ aggressive attitude did not only emerge in time of conflict, but that it was a constant, apparent at organizational meetings. For instance, Blaire said that ACT organizers communicated their guidelines for anti-oppression as if they were “a Bible passage (...) a dogma.” In line with Rebecca’s comment on people getting harsh

reactions from certain ACT organizers, sometimes even for simply asking questions, Blaire noted that although she agreed with most, if not all, of ACT's principles, she could not have raised a critique or a question anyway, because “then they would feel threatened and not want you in that space.” Her depiction of the beginning of an organizational meeting sounded like certain methods were not up for debate:

“This is how we're going to structure our meeting.” Um... “Pass the baton if you want to speak. Don't talk about others that aren't here. If you don't agree with this, this, this, this, and this,” which is all a part of their intersectional framework, “then you can leave. This is a space that you are not welcome in.”

Although ACT organizers probably did not use these exact words, this is how they came across to many activists. Even Sarah, who did not attend any organizational meeting found ACT “too rigid.” Blaire shared finding out that she was far from being the only one to censor herself and feel silenced, when she talked to other former attendees of ACT meetings after getting cut off from the group herself. “[W]hat Bob says goes basically, and if you disagree with him, you would *pay* for it. And if you said something that was disagreeable to him online, he could *bury* you in... in that” [Emphasis added], said Blaire. Rebecca added that other ACT organizers too had a “This is the idea and that’s how it’s going to stay” attitude. Connor reiterated that the communication problems this demeanor caused were personal, that is, not related to the ideology of ACT but to the activists running it, by saying “it was the people that stopped me from going [to meetings].” Kate felt the same. In fact, she noted appreciating and having enjoyed the structural measures taken to make meetings anti-oppressive, such as the recitation of the community agreements at the beginning, “[b]ut the leadership and the people were the problem.”

The meeting structure Kate appreciated is not without critique. Especially thanks to Blaire's description, it could be seen that some of ACT's guidelines concerning discussions resembled what starr (2006, p. 382) calls “highly formalized methods of equalizing conversation space.” starr (2006) argues that such mechanized measures assume sameness of everyone who enters the activist space, and reinforce the exclusion of people who are unable to give what is expected from them in certain radical activist countercultures, such as people who could be deemed offensive for not using the correct social justice terminology, or “authorized language” as Kennelly (2011, p. 99) describes borrowing Bourdieu’s concept.

After providing more details regarding the context in which ACT had conflicts with other activist figures in the region, the next section explores ACT’s exclusionary performance of a radical activist subcultural identity. Led by activists who upheld a rigid understanding of anti-oppression ethics and performed an exclusionary radical activist subcultural identity, ACT had serious conflicts with people who deviated from their norms and values. The most salient manifestation of this issue was the severe divisions within the animal activist community and many activists’ departure from the anti-Business or even the regional social justice scene altogether. The ironically alienating effect of ACT’s supposedly inclusive politics is explored through the white and middle-class connotations of this group’s radical activist identity. The requirement of certain subcultural capital to begin and maintain participation in ACT is discussed with an emphasis on the fact that it was not available to all, especially not to the communities that are marginalized due to their racialized, impoverished, and/or immigrant status.

An exclusionary radical activist subculture of purity

“I’m concerned about the sacrifice of human solidarity
for the pursuit of purity” – Alexis Shotwell (2016, p. 12)

Although the activist opposition to The Business has been quite diverse for decades, some ACT organizers’ efforts to impose their understanding of ethics and politics on this entire community seems to have disrupted its unity. According to Rebecca and Steph, the promising cooperation against The Business made possible by ACT's early community-building efforts only lasted for a short time until it collapsed. The initial stages of this community-building resemble the inter-organizational dynamics in the Chicago LGBTQIA+ activist community in the beginning of the 21st century, explored by Sandra Levitsky (2007) through in-depth interviews with various movement leaders. According to her analysis, activist organizations in this context managed to sustain their community, share resources, and support each other because, despite continuing to productively criticize each other's different approaches and specializations, these activists were aware of the significance of different voices and kinds of activism that allowed them to cement “a unified movement identity in a heterogeneous organizational field” (Levitsky, 2007, p. 271).

Unfortunately, since personal grudges, masculine power struggles, and ideological divisions began to crack the regional animal activist community, the opposition to The Business gradually moved away from this description and mirrored the animal rights movement in Poland where, according to Jacobsson (2012, p. 354), “organisational fragmentation impedes effective collective action.” The similarity between these two cases is heartbreaking. After interviewing Polish animal activists and studying public documents regarding the most active organizations in the years 2010 and 2011, Jacobsson (2012, p. 354) notes that some animal activist groups in

Poland seem to be not even interested in recruiting new members, which is an observation made by many participants about ACT as well. Jacobsson (2012, p. 364) argues that the primary reason is viewing members “as a complicating factor hampering the smooth running of the organisation.” Polish activists’ solution is recruiting *volunteers* instead, who simply contribute labour through the tasks they are given, unlike *members* who are understood as being entitled to a voice in the group’s decision-making (Jacobsson, 2012). In fact, this is exactly how an activist of colour described their involvement with ACT to me in an informal conversation. Although many animal activists in the region including some participants confidently considered them an ACT organizer, they strongly disagreed, identifying as a volunteer who was never invited to join organizational decision-making. Jacobsson asserts that this reluctance to welcome new people into the organizational space is indicative of a non-democratic inner structure (2012, p. 364), another analytical point applicable to ACT.

Jacobsson (2012, p. 364) identifies two animal rights groups in the Polish context which resemble ACT in the sense of being “organised around a charismatic leader and a small groups [sic] of people working closely together.” One of these organizations is also left in “splendid isolation in relation to the movement at large” (p. 357) as a result of frequently accusing other activists of political regression. The same could be said about ACT. Jacobsson (2012) concludes that the animal rights movement in Poland is scarred by personal quarrels, rivalry, competition, and lack of trust between activists who publicly criticized each other, questioned each other’s intentions and talked behind each other’s backs, just like how participants of this study described most of the ACT-era of anti-Business opposition. Alas, as if

commenting on animal rights movement in Poland or on anti-Business activism, Jones (2004, p. 152-153) writes:

Feminist practice requires assuming that the other person (or group) is acting in good faith unless you have solid evidence to the contrary (...) [T]he confrontation of thesis with antithesis will never lead to synthesis in an atmosphere of name-calling and character assassination.

Unfortunately, this is exactly what went on amongst anti-Business activists. Kate and Blaire recalled that some ACT organizers defied their own principle of not speaking ill of an absentee, “trash-talked” another animal activist for 45 minutes before a meeting, and accused them of racism and betrayal without giving any explanation.

As noted, I initially believed that the apparent animosities between some ACT organizers and certain animal activists were rooted in ideological differences, because I had already witnessed that Bob was publicly accusing some animal activist individuals and organizations in the region of oppressive and discriminatory behaviour, and ACT was refusing to be associated with them. Yet, some ACT organizers’ rigor in anti-oppression philosophy coupled with a rigid understanding of ethics, translated into very high standards in both ideology and activist praxis, quite difficult to attain by most of the animal and other social justice advocates in the region. The most striking example was Bob denying many people a legitimate activist agency because they were not vegan or straight-edge, as told by Rebecca, Adam, and Steph. Rebecca commented: “[E]ssentially, [ACT was] saying that (...) someone who cares about [a particular nonhuman being exploited by The Business] can’t care about them unless they’re vegan. And it’s a huge turn-off for people. Very alienating.” Namely, this was not a promotion of veganism but an invalidation of people’s activist efforts and even feelings of compassion. As discussed, other aberrations from a

perfect radical activist ideal according to Bob and some other ACT organizers included being a welfarist (or having ever been a welfarist), utilizing legal and bureaucratic avenues for activism, advocating for individual nonhumans, and even acknowledging the complex nature of certain social justice issues. Hence, it appears as though some ACT organizers' idea of being correctly radical evolved into an all-encompassing understanding of social justice ethics, which Alexis Shotwell (2016) would call *purity politics*.

Although Shotwell (2016) analyzes many forms of the impossible pursuit of personal and collective purity (such as detoxifying diets and ableist eugenics), the relevance of her conceptualization of purity politics to social justice activism is most clearly articulated in an interview (2017, para. 21):

On the left, a lot of the time what happens is that people try to have only the right words, the right views, the right lines. They develop a kind of party line that they try to hold to, and then spend quite a lot of time disciplining other people's behavior and speech. It's not that we want to say harmful things or have bad views. But this turns into purity politics when that self-monitoring or disciplining other people's speech or behavior is all we end up doing.

Shotwell's (2017) words resonate with the anti-Business context in which Bob and some other ACT organizers seemed like they believed they had the right answers to every question, and attempted to push away anyone who were not quickly persuaded into their analyses and continued a behaviour they deemed oppressive and unethical. Starr (2004, p. 149) offers a solution to activist obsession with ethical purity with the assistance of Massimo De Angelis's insights when she recommends activists to "move from debates over the 'ethical correctness' of particular acts to an evaluation

of ‘whether that action was a responsible action in that context.’” Much harm could have been averted had activist had such a perspective.

Although ACT had a strong commitment to anti-oppression in theory with particular emphases on anti-racist, anti-colonialist, and anti-capitalist principles – which led to very low tolerance to any person, organization or behaviour that was thought of as violating those – ironically, their rigid organizing approach reflected whiteness and middle-class privilege. As Kennelly (2011) suggests, social justice activist subcultures in contemporary Canada tend to be shaped by a white, middle-class culture, which is where the majority of progressive youth activists in Canada come from. It sounds like the qualities some ACT organizers expected from other activists were strongly correlated to having a white, middle-class cultural background too. As noted, all participants of this study praised Bob for being knowledgeable and articulate. Kennelly (2011, p. 136) argues that, because of the cultural capital it requires, “being articulate about one’s political ideologies” is “part of a middle-class frame.” She also calls the working-class performance of activists who come from middle-class backgrounds “performing grunge” (Kennelly, 2011, p. 77), and continues:

[O]ne’s academic or professional attainments, and the accompanying cultural capital that this accrues, mark a very specific subcultural identity that is only attainable by a limited few. If one wears only used clothing, but can cite Gramsci and Chomsky at will, where does one rest within a stratified society?

Although I do not know how often he cited Gramsci or Chomsky, it was clear that Bob was “very well-educated” as Rebecca suggested,

Kate felt self-conscious for not being very knowledgeable on certain topics, because she knew that ACT organizers (“the cool kids” in her words) had high expectations in this regard. Considering that access to knowledge is a privilege in a sexist, racist, and capitalist system, it can be argued that ACT’s criteria were exclusionary. An impoverished activist of colour with little formal education, for instance, might not have ever felt comfortable enough to speak their mind at an ACT meeting. Because, in an all-white environment where activists are frowned upon for not being well-informed, a supposedly friendly rule to hear from everyone at a meeting would have likely not been enough for them to develop the necessary sense of trust and belonging to truly open up and speak their mind.

Because of ACT organizers' anti-academic tendencies for perceiving academia as necessarily being elite (a bold blanket statement which eliminates promising possibilities of cooperation between scholarship and social justice activism), their impatience with under-informed people was particularly odd. Yet, as established, ACT organizers were not doing much to educate other activists either. According to Adam and Rebecca, instead of more fully informing and guiding newcomers, ACT organizers expected them to be ready and willing to execute radical activist strategies. starr (2006, p. 382) claims that this attitude is linked to dynamics of racialization and argues, “[W]hite organizing assumes that activists arrive at meetings having decided already to be committed and to do inconvenient, uncomfortable things in service of their convictions.” Although many non-white activists also carry out quite risky radical and subversive actions, they tend to be motivated by communities of colour they belong to, which are usually more supportive and caring than all-white activist groups (starr, 2006). Because people of colour in North America “often become politicized *through* their families and immediate communities” (Starr, 2004, p. 144,

emphasis original), and tend to undertake activist work as a community, activists of colour are more likely to be aware of the significance of every task within activism including invisible and emotional labour, and to avoid glamourizing an action simply because it is radical or visible (starr, 2006).

Bob's expressive leadership was only one aspect of how a dominant white, middle-class culture reflected on ACT. The very activist subculture ACT represented as well as the qualities one must have to comfortably participate in it were also significantly defined through this privileged social location. According to Kennelly (2009c, p 263) people who are most "at ease" in youth activist countercultures in Canada are white and middle-class. That is because the necessary subcultural capital – including "particular rules of attire, behaviour, and belief" – is determined within a white, middle-class cultural framework which dominates this kind of radical activism in Canada (Kennelly, 2009c, p. 263). Kennelly also (2011, p. 76) posits that "one's capacity to take up and enact a specific subcultural identity is shaped by one's class position within a stratified society" and adds: "Specifically, it can be difficult to extricate class from 'race,' particularly in a country such as Canada with its legacies of colonialism and racist migration policies" (p. 82). Thus, because of the difficulty of overcoming cultural barriers, integrating oneself into a radical activist subculture is most difficult for recent immigrants of colour (Kennelly, 2011, p. 82).

On a positive note, Kennelly (2009c, p. 263, 266) argues that activist friends often assist people through this challenging process of starting and maintaining their activism by introducing them into a new activist community and acting as cultural guides at activist spaces. She notes the importance of being "invited in" to these communities as well as having friends who go to activist events, which creates an incentive for participation (Kennelly, 2009c). However, Kennelly also maintains that

activist friendships can also be exclusionary and even act as barriers blocking certain people's participation who do not have the "authorized language" (2011, p. 99) of said subcultures and thus are not "in the know" (2009c, p. 268). Although these barriers can be overcome through friendly invitations from activists, Kennelly (2009c, p. 263) acknowledges that such invitations are not equally available to everyone: "Since friendships often emerge unconsciously along class, gender, and race lines – because the people with whom we feel 'at ease' often share these characteristics with us – they can also serve to perpetuate class-, gender- and race-based exclusions."

After noting that developing such friendships is harder when one's culture and social location is farther from the average radical activist (2009c, p. 265), Kennelly adds that close friendships tend to make activist organizations less accessible to outsiders, because friends are likely to by-pass organizational formalities such as publicly announcing an important meeting (2009c, 269). Similar to Kennelly's experience at an informal kitchen table meeting (2011, p. 126), the fact that the only ACT meeting I could attend was at Bob's house was a real example of this phenomenon. This informality of ACT also went against some basic principles for intersectional, accessible and inclusive activism conveyed by Nocella (2012), who recommends holding activist meetings in a central location easily accessible by public transportation.

After accessing one ACT meeting which was not particularly accessible, I still was not *invited in*. In fact, the reason why Bob did not notify me about a second ACT meeting might be the reluctance I expressed at the first and only one I attended about the idea of camping in front of The Business overnight, which might have constituted a failure in the "radicalism litmus test" starr (2006, p. 383) writes about. She claims a pattern in the radical activist movements in North America where new recruits'

radicalism is tested by more established organizers with invitations to confrontational actions, and the disappearance of people who have failed in proving their radicalism to these movement leaders from the activist scene is rarely considered a loss (starr, 2006). My reluctance was certainly linked to the vulnerability that comes with an immigrant status, and my experience with ACT constitutes an example of an activist of colour who was not allowed access into and therefore failed to join an activist organization despite high determination to do so. This alone is enough reason to conclude that, although all ACT organizers were anti-racist in principle and enacted measures to make their organization anti-oppressive, ACT was not particularly inclusive of or welcoming to racialized people. Therefore, former ACT organizers should not assume that their meetings were equally welcoming to and inclusive of oppressed people simply because they avoided using inaccessible academic terminology to prevent elitism from developing within the group while failing to offer an essential sense of community.

In fact, ACT was doing the opposite. According to participants' accounts, anyone who did activism in a way Bob and some other ACT organizers disapproved was quickly written off, but restoring these friendships and camaraderie was difficult. When ACT organizers dissociated themselves from an individual, group, organization, publication, business, festival, conference, and so forth, their decisions were final. According to Steph, who claimed to have made a long list of every person and institution that was aggressively cut off from ACT, in ACT "[t]here was no chance for... permission to grow, to change. (...) Once you're banned, you're banned for life." In addition to Max, Steph's other example to support this claim was Brad (former The Business employee, whistleblower, and animal activist) with whom ACT refused to work, accusing him of welfarism. Although he did initially start a welfarist

campaign, Steph noted that Brad adopted a liberationist approach later on, went vegan, and has been giving talks for animal liberation. However, ACT organizers did not seem interested in restoring severed activist connections and reintegrating people into the anti-Business campaign even after there was no longer a reason for division.

In order to keep the purity of the activist space, ACT organizers occasionally resorted to what Kennelly (2011, p. 76-77) characterizes as “symbolic violence,” interactions that aggressively remind some activists their exclusion from the group, which “helps to maintain the distinctions between those who feel that they are ‘in place’ (or ‘in the know’) versus those who are ‘out of place.’” For instance, some activists have been shamed and shunned for not using the correct social justice terminology. “When you're around certain people you act a certain way, [according to] what's acceptable and what isn't,” according to Connor; and the symbolic violence used in response to deviations from these subcultural rules constituted a major reason why participants often used strong words such as “bully,” “violent,” “volatile,” “attack” and so forth to describe some ACT organizers or their behaviours towards other members of the regional activist community. After stating that he found REG much more welcoming and easier to work with, Connor claimed that “[ACT] condoned oppressive things,” referring to a number of incidents in which some ACT organizers were aggressive and hurtful towards other activists. After a specific example of Ken being verbally violent towards another activist, and other ACT organizers defending him by saying that his aggression is rooted in trauma, Steph protested: “Like, you don't know what shit I've been through either, but I'm not allowed to talk to somebody like that.”

Of course, not every counterproductive or hurtful activist behaviour mentioned in this thesis can be exhaustively explained through sociological theory, since, while

remaining an under-addressed topic, individuals' traumas and consequently compromised mental health have major influence on social justice communities and their activism. Discussing oppressive behaviour of supposedly anti-oppressive activists, Jones (2007, p. 107) notes:

At its most profound level, authentic integrity means being who you purport to be and taking responsibility for your behavior, even when it is rooted in trauma. If you have found yourself doing things that "aren't me" when you are sleepy, drunk, dissociated, or in the grip of strong emotions—and especially if those things are in any way hurtful to others—you will need to make material lifestyle changes to make sure you don't do those things again and then figure out what you will need to do to heal whatever internal ruptures led to the uncharacteristic behavior.

Unfortunately, participants suggested that ACT organizers did not self-reflect on their aggressive treatment of other activists, and, according to Steph, they did not cooperate when some members of the regional social justice community attempted to initiate an accountability and restorative justice process about this issue. However, there is more reason to believe that some ACT organizers' aggression was indeed related to their own oppression and marginalization.

Kennelly (2011, p. 76-77) uses Phil Cohen's concept of "dominated culture" to describe dissident subcultures composed of "people [who] have sought each other out as a form of refuge against a wider mainstream culture that many find to be intensely problematic." This description sounds applicable to ACT, considering my participant observations and some participants' (i.e. Adam and Blaire) comments regarding ACT organizers being friends and working together only with people who thought and acted like them. According to Kennelly (2009c; 2011), although such

tight bonds can benefit activists in the sense of emotional support and encouragement, they can also become exclusionary and hinder others' participation in activism.

Yet, some ACT organizers were not only excluding other activists from their core organizing group, but also pushing them away from anti-Business and sometimes even any social justice activism in the region. As exemplified by Ken's verbal aggression, their measures to maintain the purity of the regional activist scene was at times even contrary to their own ethical principles. Kennelly (2011, p. 77) writes:

because of their very existence as a subculture, the forms of symbolic violence become more difficult to discern, as the potential for misrecognition increases the farther the group positions itself from the mainstream. In particular, when a subculture is explicitly concerned with issues of economic and social inequality, (...) the manner in which its members reproduce aspects of these very inequalities become particularly mystified.

Unfortunately, as exemplified by the data, ACT has reproduced some forms of injustice and discrimination while attempting to create an activist community of purity, completely free from oppression. For this purpose, ACT organizers did not only isolate their group from many activists, but also grouped certain members of the regional social justice community together in terms of their relations to each other, and often distanced themselves from someone simply because they were friends with someone else they had already written off. The best articulation of this pattern came from Connor, who said that some people were simply "guilty of association" according to ACT organizers.

The next section investigates two related themes emerged from interviews with activist participants. Many of them argued that some ACT organizers tried to

control other activists involved in the anti-Business campaign by pressuring them to act in certain ways, such as ending certain friendships and picking one of two antagonistic sides in political and ethical disagreements. Activists also mentioned observing that some ACT organizers did not *trust* people who kept associating with certain members of the regional social justice community whom ACT had already dismissed for not being ethical and truly anti-oppressive activists. Many participants suggested that these activists who were regarded as *guilty by association* were treated with rudeness and aggression.

Control and trust: “Guilty by association”

Being distanced from ACT, which was often accompanied by being told by Bob (or another ACT organizer) that one is no longer welcome at anti-Business demonstrations, did not mark the end of aggression according to many participants. They also perceived this act as restricting people's movement in public space, attempting to control their behaviour. Moreover, in encounters between ACT organizers and activists they were at odds with (whether at an ACT event or not), some ACT organizers expressed obvious animosity through not acknowledging someone's presence and sometimes even by making bitter remarks. At an anti-Business demonstration, I witnessed Bob audibly calling another animal activist “a fucking joke,” simply because they were wearing a shirt advertising Brad’s anti-Business campaign that advocated for a single nonhuman abused by the facility. Steph, Jane, Blaire, and Kate shared similar experiences. Furthermore, participants frequently shared the observation that other ACT organizers followed Bob’s lead in expelling and mistreating people; hence, according to Jane, having a conflict with Bob was enough for being pushed away from ACT altogether, because “it wouldn't be just Bob you have a falling out with; nobody would speak to you.” Kate had a similar

experience: “I mean, it's awkward, because you see people and they don't say hi to you.” Although ending activist cooperation and personal relationships due to political disagreements is understandable, participants claimed having been subjected to this kind of rude attitude before any attempt for productive discussion and problem solving. In her chapter titled “Grumpywarriorcool,” in an activist academic compilation, starr (2006, p. 384) claims that one reason of this kind of behaviour is activist coolness which has salient undertones of emotional detachment, masculinity, whiteness, and class privilege, and results in “very little friendliness, and, ultimately not even what most people would call civility, like greeting people when they come into a common space.” Jane thought that the problem was more than lack of politeness: she said “[ACT organizers] purposely made me feel unwelcome.”

When some ACT organizers believed that they had sufficient reason to excommunicate someone from the regional social justice activist community, they expected other activists to follow their lead. An equally aggressive dismissal of community members who refused to dissociate from anyone considered by ACT organizers as contaminating the purity of the activist circle was not exceptional. For instance, Connor believed that, for not cutting their ties with Max immediately after the abuse allegation, he and some others were also considered as being guilty by association, and that is why certain information on this case was kept from them. The fact that “anyone who had any contact with Max at that point was basically treated as if they were also an abuser” was odd according to Steph, and evidence of an improper accountability process. I agree with Steph, because restorative justice cannot be achieved in a community if perpetrators of abusive actions are left in absolute isolation. For an accountability process to accomplish what it aims for (i.e. holding the offender accountable, ensuring that the offence will not repeat, and healing the

community in its entirety from the harm that has been caused), productive communication is essential.

ACT organizers often dissociated themselves from people, not only for continuing friendships of which they did not approve, but also for carrying on certain behaviours, such as going to a local vegan restaurant they boycotted.¹⁰ ACT organizers were not simply making decisions about whether or how to associate with others based on the decisions they made, but also pressuring them into making the same decisions with themselves. Kate was told to not go to that vegan restaurant, and Shane was told to end certain friendships by a few ACT organizers. These and many other examples (such as Adam being told to not talk to politicians and Jane to the media) were understood by participants as proof of ACT organizers' (but mainly Bob's) intention to establish total control over anti-Business activism including controlling the behaviour of every individual within this activist community.

Similar to many activists' experience (including Sarah, Jane, Kate and Blair) my communication with Bob was abruptly cut with no explanation; I cannot know why ACT organizers were not interested in allowing me to be a part of the organizational team while the group was apparently in need of momentum. Yet, one possible explanation is my relations to some activists ACT organizers were at odds with, which might have made me guilty by association in their eyes. Connor, Adam, Blaire, and Steph suggested that ACT was isolating itself from so many people in the region, because they did not (or could not) trust them.

My first encounter with the theme of trust in this research occurred during a conversation I had with Bob at an ACT-organized anti-Business protest when he

¹⁰ In fact, this issue turned into another controversy divisive of the regional social justice community, after ACT staged a demonstration in front of this business accusing its owners of labour exploitation while some workers (including local animal activists) were debunking such claims.

explained to me that ACT's reluctance to let more people into the core organizing group was based on frequent departures of activists from ACT a few months after their participation, after they gained significant knowledge about the organization. Although wanting to ensure the safety of one's activist group is more than reasonable, activists must be "aware of and working to address the destructive, exclusionary and alienating effects of security culture" (starr, 2006, p. 377), such as degradation of trust among activists. Although Adam noted that police infiltration is a real and understandable threat for social justice advocates, he also criticized ACT organizers for being suspicious of almost everyone.

Some participants argued that this lack of trust was one of the major reasons why ACT organizers hardly recruited anyone except their close friends. Connor and Blaire believed that they were not accepted in ACT because of ACT organizers' distrust based on the people they were friends with. Rebecca agreed with Steph who said that some people were "begging to join ACT," but were turned down because of trust issues. Moreover, unfortunately, Bob and other ACT organizers seemed to not self-reflectively question why so many people were leaving their group so often. ACT organizers' worry about former ACT members' knowledge regarding their group was also somewhat disheartening to hear, because many of these people who left ACT stuck around in anti-Business or other animal activism, and kept doing valuable work for nonhumans. They were clearly not police infiltrators who would hurt ACT using their knowledge of it. Furthermore, completely isolating an activist organization by projecting a fear of infiltration onto everyone who is eager to join is unfair and counterproductive at best.

In ACT's case, the lack of trust was reciprocal. Many animal activists did not trust ACT organizers either, could not be sure if they really cared about animals, and

were suspicious of their motives. Just like the suspicions regarding ACT's finances, it is unfortunate that an anti-speciesist organization is doubted for its dedication to animal liberation. According to participants' accounts (including those of Rebecca, Connor, and Steph), Bob and some other ACT organizers have also accused many animal activists of not truly caring about nonhumans for not being vegan, not actively protesting against certain animal abuse industries, or not doing activism in the correctly radical way; and such charges have aggravated the cycle of unhealthy communication among activists to the detriment of the regional animal activist community. Such controversies kept resulting in divisions within the regional activist community, because ACT organizers caused polarization by "making people pick sides" in Rebecca's words.

Although Bob (and occasionally some other ACT organizers) were blamed by the participants for the damage all these conflicts caused in the regional social justice community, Kennelly (2011, p. 109) emphasizes that "this phenomenon is not about individual character flaws," because in many radical activist countercultures in contemporary Canada, "the subculture *acts through* the people who enter its space." While this analysis does not absolve individuals from their responsibilities in hurtful actions, it illuminates a larger sociological frame to make sense of the peculiarities of ACT and the anti-Business campaign. Although ACT has been the focus of this study, the problems in anti-Business activism were not limited to those caused by this group. Masculine leadership and the consequent devaluation of women's activist labour is an issue beyond Bob and ACT. The next section explores this area through a discussion of certain types of relevant activist masculinities investigated in the academic literature on radical activism in North America.

Heroic, individualistic masculinity

In their article on “militant manhood,” a performance of radical activist masculinity, Coleman and Bassi (2011, p. 213) discuss organizations shaped “around the performance of Man with Authority,” which sounds like a fair description of ACT considering the data. They also critically analyze two activist types they identify in the British anti-imperialist and anarchist movements: Man with Analysis, and Anarchist Action Man (Coleman & Bassi, 2011, p. 206). As the name suggests, the first “dominate[s] with his analysis and control of information” (Coleman & Bassi, 2011, p. 211). The discussions on silence and control as well as the activist credentials Bob possessed clearly indicate that he was a good example of Man with Analysis.

Anarchist Action Man, on the other hand, is satirically described by Coleman and Bassi (2011, p. 216) as “the epic hero, single-handedly fighting against enemy forces for the triumph of good over evil.” They argue that confrontational actions being highly valued over uncontentious advocacy is a characteristic of activist cultures influenced by this kind of masculinity (2011, p. 216). Bob’s no-compromise principles as well as ACT’s quarrelsome approach in the regional activist community are evidence to the applicability of this concept to this activist context. Moreover, it can be argued that the lawsuit Bob has been facing as a result of his political dissent against The Business, which is owned and operated by a powerful and dominant man in the region, further reinforced Bob’s identity as a heroic masculine leader. Coleman and Bassi (2011, p. 216-217) claim that “physically confront[ing] a man representing the status quo (...) with a willingness to sacrifice himself in the process” is how such masculine leaders are often framed in certain activist subcultures. Bob’s image of suffering for the cause, for nonhumans, and on behalf of the rest of the animal activist community (i.e. activists who have not faced a lawsuit), certainly reflected this idea of

self-sacrifice. Moreover, travelling to and from animal activist events with Bob and other activists, I have encountered a few of Bob's pep talks, encouraging me and other relatively less experienced activists to throw him under the bus if we are intimidated by the police. Casually mentioning his own arrests, Bob was also comforting us, although there was never much risk of arrest or related anxiety.

Speaking of the conflicts that took place amongst activists in the region, Jane and Adam shared their observation that Bob was clashing mostly with other men. Jane added that he was also more aggressive in his interactions with men: "I got the feeling that he was really hard on these individuals. Like, maybe he saw himself as some kind of protector of women." Kheel (1993; 2006) not only draws parallels between women's and nonhumans' perceptions in the Western culture as weak and in need of protection, she also investigates how the idealization of heroic activism glorifies the individual who shows courage, takes risks, and makes sacrifices to save someone objectified as passive and helpless. The masculine individualism of this heroic activist culture is emphasized by many feminist scholars (Coleman & Bassi, 2011; Jones, 2004; Kheel, 1993; 2006). Without a response from Bob, which could have complicated this analysis, data suggest that his activist persona reflected all the aforementioned performances of activist masculinity: *Heroic Anarchist Action Man with Analysis and Authority*.

Yet, Bob was not the only dominant masculine leader in the anti-Business animal activist community. Although Bob was the activist frequently blamed for his "ego" and "narcissistic" behaviour, I observed these to some extent during my interview with Adam too, who repeatedly credited himself while criticizing Bob for putting his identity before animal activism: "[J]ust on my own, my activism has been very effective, just being on my own and gathering small groups of people for what

I... for whatever purposes that I need.” Adam did work hard and accomplish a lot for the anti-Business campaign indeed, and he is entitled to the activist pride he earned. However, he rarely acknowledged other activists' contributions which often manifested in his choice of pronouns: “We fought that and we... I was successful.” With his performance of a proud, self-confident, and occasionally intimidating masculinity, he tended to dominate our conversation, a behaviour Gaarder's (2011) participants often criticized their fellow activist men for. Moreover, while analyzing the discourse a dominant activist man used, Coleman and Bassi (2011, p. 212) interpret his “recurrent emphasis on the word ‘I’” as a way of “conveying a sense of his own authoritative position.”

Another example of Adam's use of a behaviour he criticized in Bob was when he silenced a woman ACT organizer, although naturally he did not describe the situation in these words. Attempting to demonstrate how every member of ACT except Bob was kept underinformed and thus were not competent at speaking to the media, Adam recounted an instance in which a woman ACT organizer was struggling (according to Adam) in answering a journalist's questions: “[S]he was not prepared to speak to the media. So, I just rushed over and took *control*, and got the message that *I* needed out to the media” [Emphases added]. In addition to the choice of pronoun which supports the analysis above, this example demonstrates how the theme of control emerges in yet another man's behaviour, who is already another prominent animal activist and organizer figure in the region.

Interestingly enough, Adam was neither a Man with Analysis nor an Anarchist Action Man. First of all, he was definitely not an anarchist; in fact, he used this word with a pinch of disdain. He used the term “social justice warrior” dismissively, like many conservatives do. He also chose to not call himself an animal liberationist and

identified with an animal rights activist identity, because of its less radical connotations. Although he was sued by The Business too, he regularly did less confrontational but as significant activist work. Secondly, despite his obvious intelligence and critical thinking abilities as a successful animal activist, Adam was not a Man with Analysis either, clearly exemplified by his willingness to share information with other activists and the public. Moreover, Adam's humility about his inexperience in activism and willingness to educate himself on a wide array of social justice topics are reasons for optimism. However, some of Adam's words and actions (especially repeatedly highlighting his own role in the anti-Business campaign) are certainly evidence to the fact that heroic, individualistic masculine leadership in this regional animal activist community has been a problem beyond individuals like Bob. The dynamics behind these patterns must be further unpacked to prevent social justice activism from being reduced to a "struggle of (male) good against (equally male) evil" (Coleman & Bassi, 2011, p. 218).

Identity before solidarity

In an informal conversation, a seasoned anti-Business activist shared their frustration with some activist individuals and organizations joining the opposition to this speciesist facility, guided by the hope that it is *they* who finally end this abuse of nonhumans. "It's really annoying (...) when people (...) shine the light on themselves and look for all the praise, look for all the attention," said Steve. Steph argued that, when other groups and individuals decided to protest in front of The Business at the same time ACT did, "[Bob] sees that as an *attack* rather than as a coalition building. (...) And instead he's...he's going to do everything that he can to distinguish his protest from the other, and to keep them as distinct entities [Emphasis original.]" While activists and organizations that put their identities before the cause failed nonhumans

and weakened the regional animal advocacy by disappearing from the activist scene relatively soon (due to lost motivation, interest or hope), preoccupation with who gets credited for activist victories led to an erosion of solidarity, trust and community.

The toxic culture in the anti-Business activist community might have also turned away many newcomers from activism, inflicting animal activist movement long-term damage in addition to a bad name in the region. Almost all participants identified humans' identities getting ahead of nonhumans and the advocacy for them as the underlying cause of all these problems. Rebecca's words offer a fair summary:

I mean, get over your own shit. Like, nobody cares about you personally [Chuckles.] And I don't mean that in a mean way. I just mean, like, you know, this isn't about you. This isn't about, um, whether or not your name was mentioned twice in a newspaper article. Nobody cares. Like, stop being... stop being in the forefront. Stop caring about, um, your persona in this situation and do what's right to actually move these issues forward and make a difference for animals in the world.

In her assessment of the US anti-globalization movement in terms of its racialized dynamics, Starr (2004, p. 140) makes a distinction between

“product”- oriented organizing, in which the most experienced people make sure to get all the work done in the way most likely to “win” the material/political struggle at hand, and “process”-oriented organizing, in which the maximum number of laypeople are involved at every stage.

While the product-oriented organizer is focused on short-term material gains, process-oriented organizing prioritizes strengthening the activist community for a sustainable, long-term activism (Starr, 2004, p. 140-141). Starr (2004) argues that process-oriented

organizing is more widespread in communities of colour in which solidarity trumps individualism, whereas white activists tend to be more product-oriented and conceptualize success in terms of short-term material gains towards the activist goal. Although ACT has been criticized for undermining solidarity and inflicting long-term damage to the regional animal activist community, I argue that neither ACT organizers nor their critics bore a process-oriented approach to activism, since closing down The Business seemed to be the top priority in participants accounts while the harm inflicted on the activist community was a concern mostly *because* it was antithetical to this goal. Considering Starr's (2004) analysis, I suggest that this might be an outcome of all participants and the animal activists they criticized being white. Nevertheless, a process-oriented approach to organizing which incorporates tending to the community and nurturing it back to health seems to be what the anti-Business activist community needed, and still needs.

Activist self-harm

Activists getting hurt as a consequence of injurious patterns of communication is a salient theme in this research. Although the narrative mainly suggests that some animal activists hurt the others throughout their mutual involvement in the anti-Business campaign, I call this phenomenon self-harm for two reasons. First, considering that these are all members of the same community working for the same cause, aggressive infighting is simply activists shooting themselves in the foot. Secondly, as discussed below, ACT organizers, whom would be framed as the aggressors by many participants, got hurt too when hostility and disregard permeated the culture of this activist community.

All participants insinuated that themselves and many others suffered through their interactions with ACT, which had a "toxic culture" according to Kate. After

hearing from Steph that Max moved into a different city and from Jane that he had to get psychological help after he was “ostracized,” I concluded that Max was one person who was certainly harmed in this activist context. Yet, while describing this incident, Jane’s voice broke and at one point she actually burst into tears. It was clear that Jane has endured an emotional toll as well. She expressed that, when ignored by fellow activists at demonstrations, “you feel like... like a leper almost.” Steph described the time of her heated conflicts with Bob as “a black cloud over my activism.” Just like Kate who felt like an “outsider” who was “not liked,” Blaire remembered feeling “unwanted” and recorded that she “blocked off” some negative memories but the subject still gives her “anxiety.” Some activists who refused participation in this research voiced feelings that resemble Blaire’s. Rebecca claimed that she was personally “targeted” by Bob at one point and said: “It sucked to pull away from something I cared about.” She argued that, as a result of some ACT organizers’ antagonistic behaviour, many activists experienced “burnout,” were “made uncomfortable at their own demonstrations,” and felt “alienated” and “alone.” Connor explained his reluctant withdrawal from anti-Business activism by saying “you wouldn’t want to have anything to do with something that will harm you and your friends psychologically.” After emphasizing that, if he could, he would have “turned off [his] emotions” in order to continue, he noted distancing himself from anti-Business opposition for “self-preservation.” Even Shane, who was a core ACT organizer for quite a while, said “I wish I was afforded more respect.” As a result of invasive directives (“Do not be friends with that person”) and pejorative judgments (“You’re too liberal”) he received, he felt disrespected.

Although unfortunately this thesis could not include their voices, other ACT organizers must have gotten hurt in this aggressive, toxic culture too. In fact,

attributing ACT's very disbandment to the turmoil some of its organizers caused in the regional social justice community was no minority opinion amongst participants. With his knowledge as an insider, Shane mentioned that conflicts and aggression occurred within ACT too, between ACT organizers, which resulted in more departures from the group. Correspondingly, Kate believed that ACT disbanded because, at the end, "there was just no one left to be ACT." She presumed that ACT could have had more active members had its organizers focused on what united activists rather than what divided them. This notion highlights how ACT organizers' flaws in communication also harmed their organization and themselves.

When Shane argued that ACT disbanded due to "a lot of external forces that were really fighting to keep it down," which included both the lawsuit Bob was facing but also some activists "who wanted the same things ACT wanted [but] also wanted ACT to fail," he had a point. Yet, those activists' disregard for ACT was a result of the symbolic violence they were subjected to by some of this group's organizers. I observed the unfortunate result of these conflicts for Bob, ACT, animal advocacy and even political dissent in general, when very few people showed up at the court to support Bob in his lawsuit against The Business.

After all the harm activists endured both as individuals and as a community, their projections for the future were mostly positive, although somewhat ambivalent. Participants believed that the anti-Business campaign will look much different without ACT. Most of them were confident that the changes would be favourable such as an expected return of certain people who have stopped their anti-Business activism because of conflicts with ACT organizers. Jane and Connor are two real examples. Even Shane, a former core ACT organizer, believed that ACT's absence will allow other members of the regional activist community to reconnect. On a

negative note, Rebecca reminded that many followers of ACT and Bob would not be involved in the anti-Business campaign any longer. Although a group of people (including Bob, other ACT organizers, and some activists) did withdraw from anti-Business opposition following ACT's disbandment, a diverse group of other animal activists began to appear at protests and compensated for this absence. The most noticeable difference at anti-Business protests was the emergence of many new animal advocacy tables that allow attendees many more opportunities than before to get informed and involved.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the quality and quantity of communication within the anti-Business activist community with an emphasis on ACT organizers' interactions with other animal activists. Lack of communication on key subjects including nonhuman animals themselves and the de facto hierarchy in the supposedly non-hierarchical ACT have been discussed under the theme silence. Then the (personal) conflicts and aggression which was present in the activist community was explored with a particular emphasis on toxic masculinity. Data suggested that most of the aggression and symbolic violence that contaminated the anti-Business campaign was caused by ACT organizers performing a particular radical activist subculture influenced by a white, middle-class individualism, with a rigid understanding of ethical purity. Heroic, masculine leadership which overshadowed the woman majority's indispensable activist labour appeared to be a problem in the anti-Business campaign beyond Bob. Identity took precedence over community and solidarity; and all the oppression that was ironically reproduced by the very people who claimed to be committed to ending them caused an activist community and its many members significant harm. Yet, participants were hopeful about the future and I am too. The

sixth and final chapter includes my genuine self-reflections as an animal activist, lessons learned by myself and other activists from this experience, various suggestions for the future of animal and other social justice activism, and ends this thesis on a positive note.

Chapter Six: Our Past, Present, and Future

This chapter aims to briefly review this thesis project, delineate the messages it carries for the future of animal and other social justice activism, and locate it within the academic literature. For this purpose, first, a summary of the study is provided, including research background and findings. Then I offer a critical self-reflection including a discussion of how some resemblances between my past activist experience and the studied activist context affected my relationship to this thesis project. After identifying some major mistakes many of us social justice advocates appear to be frequently repeating, I offer the research participants' (as well as other activists' and scholars') suggestions for the elimination of those errors. The thesis concludes with an acknowledgement of its contributions to the academic literature, recommendations for further research, and some hope and encouragement for the future of animal activism.

Research background

When I found out about The Business, a human entertainment facility that has been protested for decades for exploiting animals, and ACT, a radical animal activist organization with intersectional politics actively protesting this speciesist corporation, I asked when the next demonstration was scheduled for. Especially after hearing both positive and negative comments about ACT, a grassroots organization that seemed exceptionally progressive in its ideology, I was interested in studying the demographics, internal dynamics, and activist strategies of this group and how these influenced its activism. I wanted to find out how ACT navigated the issues the literature identifies in animal advocacy in the Global North such as male-dominance (Adams, 2011; Gaarder, 2011; Groves, 1997; Wrenn, 2015), whiteness (Bailey, 2007;

Gaard, 2011; Kim, 2011; 2015; Harper, 2010a; 2011b; Nocella 2012), or class elitism (Ernst, 2009; 2010; Glasser, 2011a; Hammer, 2009b; Seiter, 2014; Socha, 2013a).

After getting ACT's approval through Bob, its de facto leader, I started my ethnographic research through participant observations at anti-Business demonstrations and collection of relevant textual data from ACT's public presence on social media. I also attended various animal or other social justice events with Bob and occasionally other ACT organizers, or simply ran into them in activist spaces. After volunteering some labour for ACT at anti-Business demonstrations and attending a short organizational meeting, right when I was about to start conducting interviews, ACT disbanded. From then on – for reasons unknown but speculated earlier in the thesis – I could neither correspond with Bob nor interview the most recent ACT organizers. These unexpected developments necessitated an alteration the direction of my research. I revised my research questions to investigate how ACT's radical, intersectional, anti-oppression politics influenced the rest of the regional animal activist community and the anti-Business campaign. I interviewed animal activists who have been involved with ACT on different levels through their participation in the anti-Business campaign, and explored ACT as a case study combining different forms of data. The next section goes over the most significant findings that arose from these data.

Summary of findings

ACT entered a decades-long, diverse anti-Business campaign – when activists were struggling to maintain the opposition under the intimidation of politically regressive lawsuits from the facility – with the aim of ending nonhuman abuse occurring there. Composed of some experienced anti-Business activists as well as some new recruits, ACT excited and motivated the regional animal activist

community with its energy, dedication, and hard-work. ACT also introduced a radical, social justice oriented, intersectional approach to anti-Business activism, informed by a comprehensive philosophy of anti-oppression. Thanks to ACT's initial community building efforts, albeit temporarily, these principles manifested in increased and strengthened connections within the regional social justice community, including organizations sharing resources and making strategic improvements to their advocacy according to their allies' political sensitivities, such as committing to responsible consumption which takes multiple social injustices into account.

Approximately a year after ACT was formed, nonhuman abuse in The Business came under public scrutiny following a few workers coming out as whistleblowers and verifying activists' long-standing claims in this regard as well as on the exploitation of humans and the environment by this facility. While The Business responded with increased efforts to silence dissent, including targeting more activists with debilitating lawsuits, the opposition grew due to the increased popularity of the issue, which manifested itself in multiplied numbers at protests. ACT, praised by the research participants in this regard, capitalized on this development, and managed to maintain the public's interest through a creative and lively activism. Influential public figures were hosted at anti-Business demonstrations, and home demonstrations were organized against the owner of The Business.

Yet, some participants also suggested that ACT struggled to handle the activist influx into the anti-Business campaign, because many people who were eager to join the opposition were frowned upon by some ACT organizers for their ideological or tactical approaches conflicting with those of ACT's. Founded and led by activists who adopted a radical and intersectional animal liberation stance informed by anarchist

theory, ACT was not open to welfarism for instance. Finding many other activists' approaches counterproductive to the goal of animal liberation or even outright offensive to human and nonhuman oppressed groups, ACT began to isolate itself from these individuals while some ACT organizers frequently had aggressive public quarrels with them.

In the meantime, Bob, a co-founder and the de facto leader of ACT, gradually became a highly prominent activist figure in the region. Thanks to his knowledge and articulate expressiveness (read: white, middle-class cultural capital) as well as his experience in activism, no-compromise approach, and the price he was paying under state repression in the form of a lawsuit (read: radical activist subcultural capital), Bob received a lot of attention and respect, and accumulated significant power in the regional social justice community. Bob ended up being perceived as not only the leader of ACT but for many people as the entire organization itself. Participants offered multiple rationales for this phenomenon. One possible explanation provided by these activists is that, despite ACT's commitment to encourage its members in developing their activist skills, no one managed to catch up to Bob's merits in being a competent organizer, which resulted in ACT consistently being represented by Bob to the general public. Some argued that ACT was mainly composed of young and inexperienced activists who simply looked up to Bob and were either oblivious or indifferent to the fact that he was taking too much space in the organization.

While Bob was routinely speaking and acting on behalf of ACT, his analysis gradually dominated the organization. Challenging or questioning him was difficult for many reasons. First of all, he had an established activist reputation, which also entailed being understood as having the *correctly radical* analysis (starr, 2006). Secondly, some participants suggested that, not only could this knowledgeable and

articulate organizer easily refute or dismiss alternative opinions, the aggressive masculinity he performed through group discussions was intimidating, especially to people who were not as informed, experienced, confident, or vocal. Moreover, most participants claimed that other ACT organizers were often following Bob's lead in activist disputes, antagonizing the critics, thus creating another obstacle for their sustained participation in the anti-Business campaign.

Complaining about the frequency and intensity of the conflicts amongst the regional animal and other social justice activists, participants claimed that these were not all ideological or tactical but usually motivated by Bob's personal grudges or caused by (mostly men) activists' competition for fame and power. Bob was even accused of aggravating tensions on purpose and framing personal problems as political in order to justify expelling his adversaries from the regional activist scene. Some participants argued that Bob (and some other ACT organizers) attempted to control other activists' behaviour by banning them from anti-Business protests or demanding that they end their friendships with individuals deemed oppressive by ACT. Anyone who did not comply received a similarly aggressive treatment and was written off, according to the interviewed activists. They argued that many ACT organizers did not trust people who deviated from ACT's principles (in theory or in application), thus refused to collaborate with them for anti-Business activism. Participants claimed that this lack of trust manifested in ACT organizers not recruiting anyone into their core group except their friends, and not sharing vital information with anyone who does not belong to this circle, including on matters directly concerning activists such as serious accusations towards some members of the regional social justice community. Participants suggested that many activists were considered *guilty by association* by some ACT organizers due to some of their

friendships and thus were deprived of valuable information, which hindered their capacity to do effective and just activist work in the region.

Abundance of aggressive conflicts and the consequent alienation of many activists from ACT led to this group becoming further isolated from the rest of the animal activist community. Many participants began perceiving ACT to be a clique, an exclusionary group of close friends, or even a cult led by Bob and populated with his followers. Regardless of these descriptions, it was clear that ACT was highly influenced by Bob's strong masculine persona. Furthermore, this organization was upholding a particular radical activist subcultural identity and a very rigid understanding of anti-oppression ethics. Therefore, many activists were shunned by some ACT organizers for simply not being vegan or straight-edge, even denied a legitimate activist voice, because these behaviours contradicted with ACT's stringent subcultural rules.

Some ACT organizers' attempt to impose a subcultural hegemony on a diverse activist community was futile, because this radical activist identity did not appeal to many. In fact, because this subcultural identity is constructed through the codes of a white, middle-class culture (Kennelly, 2011), the requirements for adopting it were exclusionary. Activists reported feeling inadequate at ACT meetings due to extent of their knowledge, even when they had received a high level of formal education, which is not equally available to underprivileged communities. The culture of heroic individualism – as exemplified by Bob's highly praised absolute leadership – and the erosion of community as a result of ACT's constant antagonism further reflected the whiteness of this group (Starr, 2004; starr, 2006), contradicting its principle of inclusivity. It would be safe to assume that an underprivileged activist of colour, who is likely to be socialized through a culture that values community dearly (Starr, 2004;

starr, 2006), would find it difficult to feel welcome in and to develop a sense of belonging to an activist organization like ACT.

Individual and organizational identities impeding effective work by and solidarity amongst activists appeared to be a major problem in the regional animal activist community. Women's voices were rendered inaudible by men's loud arguments; and while men kept taking the credit for activist successes, women's labour hardly got acknowledged. The toxic culture that developed as a result of frequent aggressive conflicts weakened the anti-Business campaign and the regional social justice community by leading to the departure of many competent activists. Reinforcing the stereotype, animal activists in the region remained predominantly white, arguably partially because the hostile activist environment was alienating to activists coming from non-white cultures.

Individuals, organizations, and the whole regional social justice community got hurt throughout all these conflicts. Although ACT organizers were blamed for this outcome, they suffered too, since the core organizing group was not immune to aggression or toxic masculinity. In fact, ACT might not have disbanded, had it been an integral element of a strong social justice activist community held together by respect and solidarity. Bob, on the other hand, might have had much more support from this community when he most needed it in his struggle against a lawsuit by The Business. Maybe the most important of all is that the nonhumans' interests got lost in all these quarrels between humans. As many participants noted, time and energy that could have been invested into advocacy for animals were wasted through activist infighting. Unfortunately, these patterns of us activists reinforcing the very oppressions and injustices we claim to combat are too common. As an activist researcher, it would only be fair for me to critically inspect my own history of

activism and honestly reflect on my own shortcomings similar to those censured in this study, which is what the next section attempts.

Self-reflection

When I moved to Canada a few years ago, I was clueless about some of the key issues that shape the societal power relations on this land. Colonialism and white privilege constitute two significant examples. My severe lack of knowledge on these subjects led to some embarrassingly inaccurate and misguided interpretations of, and sometimes even offensive remarks on complex and controversial issues. Similarly, I remember thinking that I was white until an educational intervention by a friend and fellow activist of colour. In short, I was a recent immigrant of colour in need of mentorship and guidance to make sense of my new social surroundings and to develop an informed and just activist praxis accordingly. These pieces of information are relevant to this thesis, because data suggest that, although ACT promised to be anti-racist and inclusive, as an underinformed newcomer who occasionally fell short of practicing anti-oppression due to cultural differences, my acceptance into ACT was highly unlikely. This is also ironic in the sense that, although I managed to educate myself on colonialism, whiteness, and some other fundamental aspects of the social structure of Canada and the rest of the Turtle Island, this process could have been accelerated had I had more assistance from friends and activist fellows like ACT organizers.

Yet, judging others for their flaws is often easier than turning a critical lens to one's own behaviour, and animal or other social justice advocates are no exception in this regard. At the end of a lengthy thesis that criticizes animal activists for what they have and have not done, it is only fair to share some sympathy and admit that, my activist experience involves making some of the same mistakes, which had similar

counterproductive outcomes. Throughout this research, I noticed many similarities between the widely condemned behaviour of some ACT organizers and my performance as an activist during my humble, one-decade long history of activism. In the first few years, I obviously embarrassed myself by frequently making overconfident and inaccurate political statements, sometimes in the form of student newspaper articles, until I confronted the unfounded entitlement and righteousness I felt due to my socialization as a cisgender, heterosexual man in a society that unfairly privileges these identities. Although both feminism and sociology taught me key activist lessons such as questioning my privilege and entitlements, those could not prevent me from screwing up altogether. After a few years of rank-and-file activism, I became somewhat of an organizer during my undergraduate years. Thus, ironically, the more experienced I got – because of the status this brought – the bigger negative consequences my activist mistakes had.

While completing my undergraduate degree, I mainly did activism in a registered student club in my university. We were a non-hierarchical group, although every year the organization had one or two more experienced members who could be identified as leaders. Yet, we did not care about the bureaucracy we had to go through every academic year, which required electing a president and six others as an executive board. We used the presidency to symbolically honour a member who worked hard for the group in the previous year, and whoever was willing to frequently sign documents on behalf of the group became an executive, sometimes when they were not even members in practice. After spending a couple years in this student club, maturing as an activist, it was my turn to become a leader when our more experienced friends graduated. Then I started making some of the same mistakes we often directly

witness in our activism, hear about in our social justice communities, or read about in activist or academic literature.

One particular instance I recalled from this activist experience while writing this thesis involved silencing a new member. As noted, although we were a registered student club, our participation in bureaucracy did not go much farther than filing official requests for room bookings on campus. When a new member, a first-year student, suggested that we change our bylaws, we noticed that most of us have not even read them. Because I thought we could use our energy for more productive purposes than rewriting a document no one cares about anyway, I opposed this idea with other members who felt similarly. As an experienced activist, I thought I was doing the right thing for the group. However, this first-year student, as well as some other newcomers who were not familiar with our group's subculture, interpreted this situation as being silenced in this organization, were alienated, and eventually left. Who could blame them? Reflecting back on this discussion, encouraging the formation of a sub-committee to work on a new draft would not have hurt; in fact, it could have led to a more authentic set of bylaws the entire group could eagerly adopt, or at least to a fruitful discussion on this subject.

In addition to falsely assuming that I knew what was best for the group, the emotional bond I developed to it has been harmful to our activism too. Because this student club was *kind of my baby*, as Shane described Bob's relationship to ACT, I was always keen to take on more work. Moreover, due to my preoccupation with the quality of the activism of this organization I felt a deep belonging to, I went as far as redoing some tasks after they were completed by the members who took them on. For instance, once I edited the finished poster of a national student conference we were organizing, because I thought of a title font which could look better. Who cares if the

font on the poster looks a little awkward? How does that reflect the quality of your activism anyway? Is the aesthetics of a poster more important than the feelings of fellow activists who might rightfully feel disrespected after investing their valuable time and labour on that poster? I needed a few more years of activist experience before starting to ask these rhetorical questions.

When I found myself in a heated debate with another activist man on our group's online mailing list, what motivated our dispute was our "male egos" (as some participants of this research would call it) more than the content of our arguments; but I only noticed this fact after it was too late. We too were dominating a woman majority community with our masculine voices. No one brought this to the group's attention at the time, but maybe that was also partially our fault. A masculine power struggle where men compete with each other through their self-righteous political analyses and activist credentials is intimidating after all, and does not constitute a comfortable environment to criticize those men and call them out on their dominating behaviour.

Doing this research and writing this thesis ended up being particularly challenging, because it required reflecting back on and questioning my past activist performance. I have noticed that my masculinity – as well as my other unearned privileges – have many times hurt my activism and the social justice communities I belonged to, both in Turkey and in Canada. Sometimes I unknowingly made my fellow activists feel idle by taking on all the work. Sometimes our group's subcultural ethics made new recruits feel unwelcome, such as an instance of someone suggesting that we use the term gender equality instead of feminism which immediately led to displeased and discouraging groans, and that person not showing up for a second meeting. Although our emotional response to this manifestation of a conformist and

depoliticizing discourse was well-founded, our impatience with any aberration from the correct social justice language cost us a potential activist fellow, which was certainly not a good bargain. To prevent this kind of groupthink (i.e. activists sharing the same approach which makes it difficult to identify its shortcomings), Jones (2007, p. 144) recommends appointing a devil's advocate at organizational meetings to bring potential risks to the rest of the members' attention, and to rotate that role to make sure that it does not lead to one individual being antagonized as a result of constantly pointing out the negative.

Most of the problematic patterns in activism explored in this thesis can be prevented by more open and honest communication. Also, it is paramount to remember that the pursuit for social justice is always more important than a single activist organization within a large social movement, just like our communities carrying more value than the identity of a single activist. Thus, although saying goodbye was difficult after forming a bond, I have left activist organizations whenever I concluded that I was no longer helping but hindering, especially when I noticed I started being considered the one leader and representative of a supposedly non-hierarchical group. An organization might struggle or even fail to continue its operation after the departure of an experienced member; but organizations are temporary while liberation for humans, animals, and the earth is a long-term project, which will continue to be pursued by activists who have learned through these valuable experiences. The next section outlines what is there for activists to learn from the ACT case, and the research participants' ideas for a more just activism in the future.

Moving forward: How to do it differently

Social justice activists are the people who care while being persecuted and demonized by states, corporations, and the mainstream media. Hence, I was cautious while shaping the content and style of this thesis to ensure that it inflicts no further harm to us activists but educates, motivates, and inspires us instead. Although malevolent attempts to abuse any social movements study by the guardians of the oppressive status quo would not be a surprise, the intended audience for this research is activists and academics who pursue social justice through their work. My hope is that we can put our guards down and be critical enough to allow ourselves to be educated by our fellow activists and scholars. It is important to remember that we are not rivals, certainly not enemies, because our activism is not a competition but a collaboration of people standing together against injustice.

Animal advocates have a lot to learn from ACT. They made valuable contributions to the anti-Business campaign, especially through their introduction of an intersectional approach as well as some radical justice principles into the regional social justice community, which was described by Steph as “bring[ing] a critical eye to the local movement.” However, ACT organizers also made big mistakes, particularly through their application of the progressive politics that defined ACT, which both hurt the animal activist campaign and the regional social justice community it has been nurtured by. One might argue that this thesis does not serve the cause of animal liberation as much as it promises while it criticizes animal activists straight from the shoulder. Yet, through my experience and education, I have learned that the stronger our communities are, the better able we will be to fulfill our responsibility of reducing and eradicating harm to other animals; and this study

contains many lessons on what to do (and what not to do) to weave those strong communities.

Similar to Starr's (2004, p. 128) compilation of anti-racist activists' proposals to solve the problems they detected in the anti-globalization movement, I asked my participants what advice they would have liked to give ACT organizers and how they would do activism differently in the future to prevent the problems explored in this study. Along with frequent pleas for more inclusion, a flattened leadership structure, and not allowing humans' identities get ahead of anti-speciesist activism, their suggestions were predominantly about communication. All participants endorsed greater dialogue amongst activists in terms of both quantity and quality. Softening the tone of activist messages, gradually easing people to radical ideas, and transparency stood out among more practical recommendations. Shane, a former ACT organizer said, "[As an activist,] you got to have the tough conversations." He added that people should be given "more space to make mistakes" because those are unavoidable and valuable learning experiences.

ACT organizers too have made mistakes, in fact the most serious ones within the regional animal activist community according to research participants. Yet, this narrative does not have to have a negative ending for the activist community, which can still heal without losing valuable activists like ACT organizers. For this to be possible, Steph argued that it is absolutely necessary for Bob (and some other ACT organizers) to apologize and be accountable for all of their actions in a process that must include everyone who has been harmed by them. According to Steph, such a restorative justice process would be the best way this regional activist community can heal. In fact, she noted that a number of activists had already spearheaded such a process before ACT disbanded, and invited Bob and other ACT organizers to a

meeting, but they did not cooperate: “[A]ll the ACT members refused to come and it ended up just being us all there, kind of having a support group moment, um, on the... the... the problems we had experienced emotionally, and with lost relationships, etc.” It would have been nice to get ACT organizers’ perspective for not attending that meeting, but, as noted, I could not correspond with them after ACT’s disbandment. Refusing to engage with criticism while demanding accountability from others constituted one of the most pernicious inconsonances between ACT’s theoretical principles and activist practice; and it caused considerable damage to the regional social justice community.

The importance of having a strong and healthy community for social justice activists cannot be overstated. In addition to directly empowering us as a resource for emotional support, our communities can also determine the quality and sustainability of our animal advocacy. For instance, after ethnographic interviews with vegans in southeastern United States, Cherry (2006; 2015) finds that having a supportive community is the most prominent factor in retaining one's veganism, whereas people who find themselves having to live as a lone vegan are more likely to go back to a vegetarian or even an omnivorous diet. Indeed, participants noted at least three individuals who have done so after their ties to their vegan and animal activist communities were severed as a result of aggressive conflicts with Bob or another ACT organizer. Kate and Steph both mentioned many more people in the region who gave up veganism, animal activism, or even activism altogether after they lost the support of their communities in similar patterns. Because our social justice communities can inspire us to do less harm, and encourage and guide us to take responsible and effective action against injustice, having sustainable communities can

be considered an activist duty not only towards ourselves but also nonhumans and every other disenfranchised group.

Building on Paulo Freire's pedagogical work, Drew (2012) focuses on the importance of maintaining critical dialogue amongst activists with the acknowledgement that every individual must be considered an equally knowing subject. This practice would prevent the top-down imposition of a static knowledge and its domination within an activist community (Drew, 2012). All activists within a community teaching and learning from each other, as projected by Drew (2012), would not only have empowered the anti-Business community but also promoted democracy and equality amongst the activists. Such a communication would assist us activists in owning up to our mistakes, questioning our own behaviour, actively listening to our critiques, repairing any damages we might have caused, and move on having learned a lesson from our experiences. And, of course, activists should allow and encourage everyone else who made a mistake to follow this path. The opposite is simply being stubborn. This approach to communication would also improve trust, and promote accountability and solidarity amongst activists, which would make our communities more sustainable. After all, we are only as strong as our communities. The next section outlines what this research project offers the academic literature, and some ideas on how it can be complemented by future research to answer some tough questions through the production of further critical and analytical knowledge.

Contributions and further research

This research project makes empirical, methodological, and theoretical contributions to the academic literature on animal activism. First of all, this thesis examines animal activists in Canada, who have rarely been studied (but see Montgomery, 2000). Moreover, as acknowledged by scholars (Aaaltola, 2011; Broad,

2013), mainstream animal advocacy has been investigated much more often than radical grassroots animal activists, and the analyses of the former have often falsely generalized as if organizations like PETA are representative of this social justice movement. In this regard, this thesis offers a novel empirical contribution, considering its geographical parameters and unit of analysis.

Many researchers chose quantitative methods such as surveys to gather data on animal advocates in the Global North (Galvin & Herzog, 1992; 1998; Jamison & Lunch, 1992; Jerolmack, 2003; Lowe & Ginsberg, 2002; Munro, 2001; Nibert, 1994; Peek, Bell & Dunham, 1996; Plous, 1991; Signal & Taylor, 2006). Among those who preferred qualitative research, the majority collected data exclusively through interviews with animal advocates (Cherry, 2006; Dillard, 2002; Drew, 2014; Greenebaum, 2009; Jacobsson, 2012; Jacobsson & Lindblom, 2012; Munro, 2005a; Purdy, 2013). Ethnographic studies of animal activists are rare (but see Cherry, 2010; Einwohner, 1999; Groves, 1997). To my knowledge, this thesis is original in combining data from participant observations, in-depth interviews, and social media into an ethnographic case study of a radical grassroots animal activist organization in North America.

Although not always explicitly named so, an intersectional feminist theoretical framework does inform many studies on animal advocacy (Corman, 2012; Deckha, 2008; Gaard, 2011; Glasser, 2011a; 2011b; Harper, 2010b; Jones, 2004; 2005; 2006; 2010; 2011; 2013; Kheel, 2006; Nocella, 2012). This valuable literature greatly influenced and informed this research. Yet, as Deckha (2012) argues, even the intersectional literature on animal advocacy tends to prioritize one axis of social power – mostly gender – in its focus and analysis, treating others as if they are secondary. Although this research inevitably overlooks a significant portion of the

complexity of social relations because its scope is limited to exploring gender, racialization, and class dynamics, these three occupy an equally central role in the analysis. The fluid narrative style of the thesis intends to illuminate the latent parallels and intersections between the patterns of these social dynamics. Manifestations of toxic masculinity, whiteness, and class privilege as interrelated and equally significant findings can also be considered evidence to this thesis fulfilling its promise to demonstrate the intersectionality of oppression within animal activism. Finally, this research project contributed to the academic literature by combining scholarship from different fields – such as social movements and Critical Animal Studies – and analytically applying relevant research on different social movements (Levitsky, 2007; Kennelly, 2009a; 2009b; 2009c; 2011; Starr 2004; starr 2006) to animal activism.

This thought-provoking study overwhelmed me on every stage with ideas for future research. As an activist researcher who aims for a radical societal change towards justice and total liberation, I believe that studying certain populations that are difficult to reach – such as the people who flip activists off and yell at us to “Get a job!” – could produce novel and valuable knowledge, both for social movements and the academic field investigating those. I believe that a Bordieuan and intersectional feminist study on how animal activists’ messages are received by the mainstream would be promising. In terms of keeping the unit of analysis as animal or other social justice activists, I argue that exploring the patterns of why and how people leave social movements would produce very useful knowledge.

Conclusion

This thesis criticized animal activists from beginning to end. Although the analysis seems to focus on negativities, there is hope in this research as there is hope

in every aspect of life. I cannot think of a better way to conclude this thesis than borrowing some hope and optimism from patrice jones, who has been an incredible inspiration to my activist and academic work. Acknowledging the youth of animal activism while discussing its critiques, jones (2010, p. 188) writes:

All movements seem to start out with a relatively narrow focus, which then widens in response to the recognition of the interconnectedness of oppression. All movements struggle with the tendency for societal imbalances in power and privilege to reproduce themselves within groups. The relatively young animal-advocacy movement has only just begun to wrestle with the often agonizing conflicts that always arise when social change movements broaden their analyses while addressing internal power disparities. Neither as affluent nor all white as it is stereotyped to be, nor as diverse as it ought to be, the movement is in the midst of an active process of internal change.

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